ESMERALDA - SOUTHERN NYE

Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Las Vegas District, Las Vegas, Nevada
Battle Mountain District, Battle Mountain, Nevada

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

WILDERNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

for

ESMERALDA-SOUTHERN NYE

PLANNING AREA

NEVADA

Prepared by

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The proposed land use plan contains wilderness recommendations on 189,675 acres of public land in Nye and Clark Counties, Nevada. The actions respond to the mandate of Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 to review all public land roadless areas of 5,000 acres or more; determine their suitability or nonsuitability for wilderness designation; and report these suitability recommendations to the President no later than October 21, 1991.

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Date the final environmental impact statement with the wilderness recommendations was made available to the public: DEC 21 1987

SUMMARY

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The purpose of the Proposed Action in one of the wilderness study areas (WSAs) examined in this EIS, as the Wilderness Act states, "Is to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness". In four of the WSAs the purpose is to continue with management of the land for multiple resource values. This document analyzes the potential impacts of designating or not designating as wilderness all or portions of five WSAs in Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada. The Proposed Action represents the BLM's preliminary wilderness recommendations for these five WSAs as they develop through the bureau planning system.

The study areas are listed in Table S-1 below:

Table S-1
LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

WSA Name	Number	Acreage	County
Silver Peak Range	NV-060-338	33,900	Esmeralda
Pigeon Spring	NV-060-350	3,757	Esmeralda
Queer Mountain	NV-060-354	81,550	Esmeralda
Grapvine Mountains	NV-060-355	66,800	Esmeralda
Resting Springs	NV-050-460	3,850	Nye

Issues

The scoping process for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Wilderness EIS encompassed issues identified by BLM staff; by the public during formal scoping comment periods on issue identification in Silver Peak, Fish Lake Valley, Goldfield, Beatty and Pahrump, Nevada (March 1982); and from comments on the draft EIS by the public and by Federal, State and local agencies. The environmental issues identified for analysis in this EIS are listed below:

Impacts on Wilderness Values
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use
Impacts on Water Sources

The following issues were identified in scoping but were not selected for detailed analysis in the EIS:

Impacts on Livestock Grazing
Impacts on Bighorn Sheep Introduction and Management
Impacts on Wild Horse and Burro Management
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Energy Resources
Impacts on Military Overflights
Impacts on Utility Corridors
Impacts on Communications Sites
Impacts on Woodland Products

Impacts on Cultural Resources
Impacts on Air Quality Classification
Impacts on Threatened and Endangered Species
Impacts on National Park Service Wilderness Proposals

Alternatives and Conclusions

The alternatives assessed in this EIS include: (1) a Proposed Action Alternative for each WSA, (2) an All Wilderness Alternative for each WSA; (3) a No Wilderness/No Action Alternative for each WSA; and (4) a Partial Wilderness Alternative for three of the five WSAs.

SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA (NV-060-338)

Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

The Proposed Action recommends 16,666 out of 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA as suitable for wilderness designation. In adddition to the recommended suitable acreage of the WSA, an additional 1,184 acres adjacent to the area would also be recommended suitable under the Proposed Action. The remaining 17,234 acres of the WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Designating the suitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve the excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the highly scenic and geologic values of the Silver Peak caldera area and Icehouse Canyon. However, wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly impaired along the suitable area's northeast and northwest borders (approximately 400 acres) due to projected mineral activity occuring within the adjacent nonsuitable area. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation would be negetatively impaired within approximately 3,734 acres of the nonsuitable area. These impacts would be concentrated along the periphery of the nonsuitable area. The disturbances would be related to projected mineral exploration and development activities, off-road motorized vehicle use and wood harvesting. The remaining 13,500 acres of the nonsuitable portion would retain their wilderness values. The WSA's special features, including bighorn sheep and wildhorses would experience only negligible impacts under the Proposed Action. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be preserved.

Approximately five visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 17,850 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of valid existing claims are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected to be developed. Impacts on exploration and development of mineral resources are not expected.

For those five springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Of the three springs located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA one would be adversely impacted due to surface-disturbing activities. No adverse impacts are projected for the remaining two springs located within the nonsuitable area.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 33,900 acres of public land in the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Designating the WSA as wilderness would preserve the scenic and natural qualities of the WSA. The outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the special features of Silver Peak caldera and Icehouse and Piper Canyons. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair natural values and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation over approximately 1,500 acres of the WSA.

Motorized recreational use of 40 visits annually would be foregone from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur. No other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected, consequently no impacts to development of valid existing claims would occur.

Seven of the eight springs located within the WSA would retain their water quality stability due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Degradation of water quality due to silitation from road construction associated with projected mineral development would occur on one spring.

No Wilderness/No Action Alternative

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, the entire 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusion

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished within 3,734 acres of the WSA, due to projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreation activities. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 30,166 acres of the WSA. The

WSA's special features, including bighorn sheep and wildhorses, would experience only negligible impacts under No Wilderness. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained.

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no impact to motorized recreational use.

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, exploration of existing claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic resources are projected to occur within the WSA. No adverse impacts on exploration for or development of mineral resources is projected.

Water quality stability in one of the eight springs within the WSA would be adversely impacted by silitation due to surface-disturbing activities associated with mineral activity projected to take place within the study area.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 33,620 acres would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Included in this figure are 3,065 acres located adjacent to the study area's boundaries, which were not part of the original WSA. These additional acres were included so as to establish a more recognizable boundary based on topography. The remaining 3,345 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Wilderness values of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation and special features would be retained within 32,620 of the 33,620 acres of the recommended suitable portion. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,000 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished and, in some instances lost, as a result of projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on the 3,345 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized vehicle use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The scenic and geological values of the WSA's special features of bighorn sheep, wildhorses, Icehouse and Piper Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained under Alternative A.

Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 33,620 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Approximately 30 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. As exploration of valid existing claims and the development of two mines are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, no impacts would occur.

For those seven springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Water quality stability of one spring, located within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA, would be adversely impacted by siltation resulting from projected mineral development activities.

PIGEON SPRING WSA (NV-060-350)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 3,575 acres of the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation that exist within the 2,138-acre unnatural portion of the WSA would be diminished. Under nondesignation naturalness values and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the south-central core of the WSA.

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.

Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims is projected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. There would be no impacts on the exploration or development of mineral resources.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 3,575 acres of public land in the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. This designation would not occur unless the contiguous CDCA WSA, Sylvania Mountains, is also designated. Pigeon Spring does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation unless considered in conjunction with the California unit.

Conclusions

Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,437 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. Less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist on the remaining lands. The projected mineral exploration activities and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would continue to degrade any natural qualities that exist on the remaining lands.

Motorized recreational use of 60 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. Exploration to prove validity of existing claims is projected to take place prior to designation, reducing the exploratory drilling from 100 drill holes under nondesignation to 50 drill holes. Mineral discovery and development are not expected to occur.

QUEER MOUNTAIN WSA (NV-060-354)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 81,550 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended nonsuitablefor wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 35,600 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost due to audio, visual and surface disturbances created by increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 45,950 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no adverse impact to motorized recreational use.

Under the Proposed Action, exploration of existing claims and the development of one open pit gold mine are projected to occur within the WSA. There are no projected impacts on exploration for or development of mineral resources.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 81,550 acres of public lands in the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, and to enhance opportunities to view deer and wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qualities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 13,000 acres of the WSA.

Motorized recreational use of the 175 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The 150 exploratory holes projected to be drilled if designation does not occur would be reduced to 75 holes if designation occurs. The projected development of one open pit gold mine would be foregone under this alternative.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 42,650 acres would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and 38,900 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation would be retained within 41,450 of the 42,650 acres of the recommended suitable area. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,200 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 34,400 of the 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The WSA's special features, including populations of deer and wildhorses, would not be adversely impacted under this alternative.

Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 42,650 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation and approximately 35 visits would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. Exploration of existing claims and the development of one small gold mine are projected to occur within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. No adverse impacts to mineral exploration and development are expected to occur within the WSA.

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS WSA (NV-060-355)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 66,800 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 38,000 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost to audio, visual and surface disturbances created from increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 28,800 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.

Motorized recreational use will be the benefiting activity as a result of the entire WSA remaining open to vehicles and the development of new access routes associated with projected mineral activity. No adverse impacts to this use is expected to occur.

Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims and development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the WSA. Sand and gravel deposits would be extracted along the WSA's western boundary. There are no projected adverse impacts on the exploration for and development of mineral resources.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 66,800 acres of public land in the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, and to enhance the protection of wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qualities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 10,000 acres of the WSA.

Motorized recreational use of 130 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims, the development of one mine for metallic minerals and the extraction of sand and gravel are projected to occur within the WSA under the All Wilderness Alternative. As no other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected, impacts to development of valid existing claims would not occur.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 23,150 acres would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and 43,650 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude would be retained within 21,750 of the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,400 acres of the suitable area would be diminshed by projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 37,300 acres of the nonsuitable area because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and projected mineral activities. Wilderness values would be retained on the remaining 6,350 acres of the recommended nonsuitable area. The population of wildhorses that inhabit the WSA would not be adversely impacted under Alternative A.

Approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected to occur. As exploration of valid existing claims and the development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, no impacts would occur. Extraction of sand and gravel resources would occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

RESTING SPRING RANGE WAS (NV-050-460)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 3,850 acres of the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Conclusions

Limited wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost within the WSA. However, the values lost do not meet the minimum wilderness criteria. No special features were found to exist within the WSA.

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.

Although mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development, neither are projected to occur. There would be no impact on the exploration or development of mineral resources.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 3,850 acres of public land in the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. This designation would not occur unless the contiguous CDCA WSA, Resting Spring Range, is also designated. The Resting Spring Range WSA does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California unit.

Conclusions

Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,400 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and naturalness values that exist on the remaining 2,450 acres would be diminished or lost due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. No special features exist within the WSA.

Motorized recreational use of 55 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed land within the WSA. As no exploration or development of mineral resources is projected within the WSA, no impacts would occur.

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Introduction and Planning Process

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING PROCESS

This Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) considers the potential impacts of designating as wilderness all or portions of five WSAs in Esmeralda and So. Nye Counties, Nevada. The analysis evolves from the Congressional requirement in Section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directing the Secretary of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to review roadless areas of 5000 acres or more having wilderness characteristics and to recommend to the President by 1991 the suitability of such areas for preservation as wilderness.

Location

The five WSAs under study are located in southern Nevada in the BLM's Stateline and Tonopah Resource Areas of the Las Vegas and Battle Mountain Districts. The total acreage contained in all five units is 189,675 acres. The Location Map shows the relative location of the planning area in relation to the State of Nevada.

The five WSAs being studied are listed in Table 1-1 below:

Table 1-1
LIST OF WILDERNESS STUDY AREAS

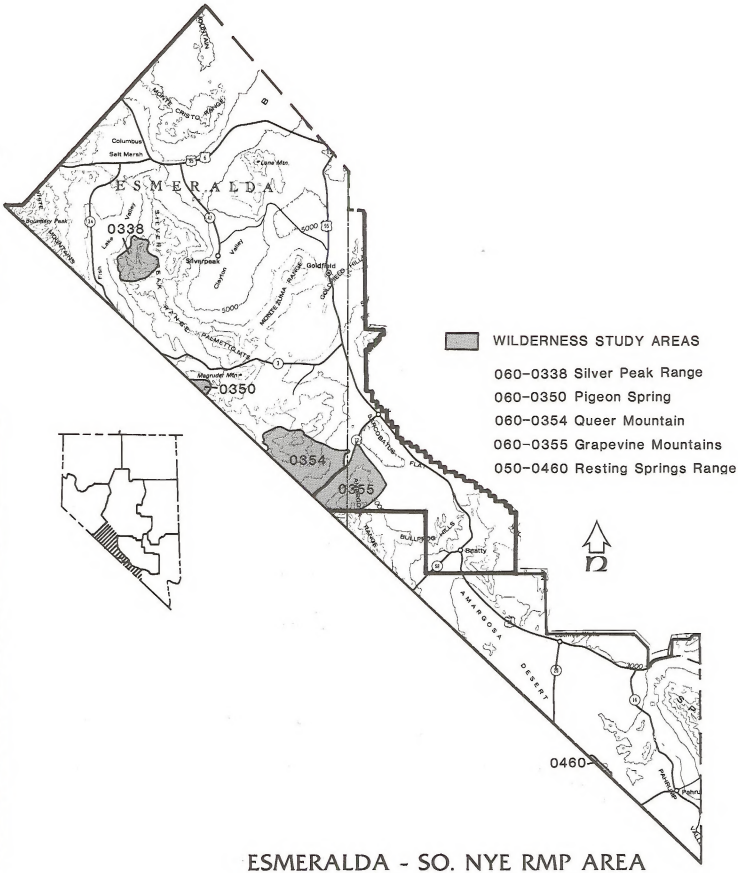
WSA Name	Number	Acreage	County
Silver Peak Range	NV-060-338	33,900	Esmeralda
Pigeon Spring	NV-060-350	3,575	Esmeralda
Queer Mountain	NV-060-354	81,550	Esmeralda
Grapevine Moutains	NV-060-355	66,800	Esmeralda
Resting Spring	NV-050-460	3,850	Nye

Purpose

The purpose of the Proposed Action in one of the wilderness study areas (WSAs) examined in this EIS, as the Wilderness Act states, "Is to secure for the American people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of wilderness." In four of the WSAs the purpose is to continue with management of the land for multiple resource values. This document analyzes the potential impacts of designating or not designating as wilderness all or portions of five WSAs in Esmeralda and So. Nye Counties, Nevada. The Proposed Action represents the BLM's preliminary wilderness recommendations for these five WSAs as they developed through the bureau planning system.

Need

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directs the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to manage the public lands and their resources under the principles of multiple use and sustained yield. Section 603 of FLPMA requires a wilderness review of BLM roadless areas containing 5,000 or more acres and roadless islands. The BLM inventory process identified WSAs which have the mandatory wilderness characteristics of size, naturalness, and opportunities for solitude and/or primitive recreation. Suitable or



ESMERALDA - SO. NYE RMP AREA

nonsuitable wilderness recommendations for each WSA will be presented to the President by the Secretary of the Interior. The President will then make recommendations to the Congress. Areas can be designated wilderness only by an act of Congress. If designated as wilderness, an area would be managed in accordance with the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the Bureau's Wilderness Management Policy dated September 1981.

Wilderness Review Process

To accomplish the mandate of Section 603 of FLPMA, the BLM implemented a wilderness review process composed of three phases: inventory, study, and reporting.

Inventory

The inventory phase identified areas with wilderness characteristics, as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964, and designated them as WSAs. Guidelines for conducting the inventory phase were set forth primarily in the BLM's "Wilderness Inventory Handbook" of 1978.

Areas studied under the planning system for wilderness were evaluated for the features described below:

Wilderness Values

The following key factors are considered when roadless areas with wilderness characteristics are identified:

Size: The area must have at least 5,000 contiguous roadless acres of public land.

Naturalness: Human imprints must be substantially unnoticeable.

Outstanding opportunities: The area must offer either an outstanding opportunity for solitude or an outstanding opportunity for primitive and unconfined recreation.

During wilderness inventory, the BLM also considers the extent to which each of the following wilderness values is present:

Special Features: Ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value.

Multiple Resource Benefits: The benefits to other multiple resource values and uses that only wilderness designation could ensure.

Diversity in the National Wilderness Preservation System (NWPS)

Also considered were the following elements of diversity in the NWPS:

Ecosystem and Landforms: Whether natural systems and features, as represented by ecosystems and landforms, are represented elsewhere in the region or in the NWPS.

Nearness to Population Centers: The opportunities for solitude or primitive recreation within a day's drive of major population centers.

Geographic Distribution: A balance of geographic distribution of wilderness areas--how many designated wilderness areas are in the same geographic area as the area being considered?

Manageability

In evaluating each WSA, the BLM also considered whether the area was capable of being effectively managed to preserve its wilderness character over the long term.

Study

During the study phase, the BLM examined each WSA by the preceeding criteria to determine which study areas would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and which would not. Recommendations for the five areas were made through the BLM's multiple use resource planning process. The BLM's planning regulations and its final wilderness study policy guided the study process.

Reporting

The reporting phase begins after completion of the draft resource management plan/environmental impact statement (RMP/EIS). A wilderness study report (WSR) and a preliminary final wilderness EIS are prepared to address the results of the study and make the preliminary recommendations as to designation or nondesignation of each WSA.

All recommendations of WSAs as suitable or nonsuitable for designation as wilderness will be reported through the director of the BLM to the Secretary of the Interior, and through the Secretary of the Interior to the President, who will make his recommendation to Congress. Only Congress can designate an area as wilderness.

Interim Management

Until Congress acts, the BLM's Interim Management Policy and Guidelines for Lands Under Wilderness Review (1979; rev. 1983) serves as the principal document for managing the seven WSAs in the Stateline Resource Area. The goal of the interim management policy is to ensure that the wilderness qualities inherent to each WSA are unchanged at the time that Congress makes it's final decisions.

SCOPING AND ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

The scoping process for the Draft Esmeralda-So. Nye Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) encompassed issues identified by BLM Staff; by the public during formal scoping comments periods; and from comments on the draft RMP/EIS by the public and by Federal, State and local agencies.

During the inventory stage, several formal public comment periods were held. Periodically, additional public input has arrived and been considered. The RMP/EIS phase of the study process was initiated on March 11, 1983 with the publication of the Notice of Intent in the Federal Register. Following this notice, a letter dated March 16, 1983 was distributed to individuals, organizations and agencies who may be affected by the RMP, inviting them to attend public workshops. These workshops were held at Silver Peak, Fish Lake Valley, Goldfield, Beatty and Pahrump, Nevada in April of 1983. Briefings on issues identification were also given to the Nevada Congressional Representatives and Esmeralda County Commissioners.

On April 11, 1984, a scoping document that outlined potential alternatives and proposed issues was distributed through a large mailing. This document invited its readers to attend one of four workshops to be held in Fish Lake Valley, Goldfield, Pahrump and Las Vegas, Nevada. Again, a briefing was held for the Esmeralda and Nye County Commissioners as well as for the Nevada State Clearinghouse. On April 19, 1984 consultation took place with the National Park Service to discuss the alternative boundaries of the Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain WSAs that are adjacent to Death Valley National Monument.

Issues Identified for Analysis

During the scoping process for the overall land use plan, three issues were identified for detailed analysis. These included range management and tenure, utility corridors and wilderness. In addition, several environmental issues specifically pertaining to wilderness, were identified by BLM staff, by the public during formal scoping and by Federal, State and local agencies. This final EIS will address only those specific environmental issues, as stated in the draft RMP/EIS, that pertain to the overall analysis of the wilderness study areas.

The following is a list of environmental issues identified for analysis in the EIS. The issues apply to all WSAs unless specifically noted.

1. Impacts on Wilderness Values. The preservation of the wilderness values of naturalness, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, and various special features of the WSAs could result from wilderness designation. The same values may be damaged or lost by uses and actions that would occur should the WSAs not be designated wilderness. The consideration of these effects is an issue analyzed in the EIS.

2. Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources. Wilderness designation could affect the development on potential and known non-energy mineral resources by withdrawing designated lands from mineral entry. Development of existing mineral resources within designated wilderness areas could be affected by wilderness management restrictions. The impact of wilderness designation on the development of potential and known non-energy mineral resources is an issue analyzed in this EIS.

3. Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use. Wilderness designation would eliminate the use of motorized vehicles for hunting and trapping access, vehicle camping, off-road driving and rocks and mineral collecting in the WSAs. Eliminating this use would shift motorized recreational uses currently occurring in the WSAs to adjacent lands. The impact of wilderness designation on motorized recreational use within the Silver Peak Range, Pigeon Spring, Queer Mountain, Grapevine Mountains and Resting Spring WSAs is an issue for analysis in the EIS.

4. Impacts on Water Sources. Water sources exist within the Silver Peak Range WSA in the form of one intermittent and seven perennial springs. Existing and projected surface-disturbing activities, such as mineral exploration and development, would negatively influence the quality of the water released from these sources. The issue of how wilderness designation would benefically impact water sources within the Silver Peak Range WSA by precluding surface disturbing activities is an issue to be analyzed in the EIS.

The following issues were identified in scoping but were not selected for detailed analysis in the EIS. The reasons for setting aside each of the issues are discussed below:

5. Impacts on Livestock Grazing. Concerns were raised that livestock operations and grazing could be modified significantly within designated wilderness areas, creating adverse impacts on existing use. This issue was considered but dropped from detailed analysis because the BLM's Wilderness Management Policy provides for the continued use of wilderness areas for livestock operations and grazing at historic levels.

Although the management practices of livestock operators in the five WSAs would be more closely regulated, they would continue as they have prior to wilderness designation, subject to reasonable controls. In addition, no range developments are planned in any of the WSAs.

6. Impacts on Bighorn Sheep Introductions and Management. Concerns regarding wildlife were raised during scoping. These concerns included re-establishment of desert bighorn sheep and construction of water developments to support new and existing populatons. The Wilderness Management Policy provides for both the re-establishment of native species and development of waters. Although there may be some restrictions placed on the way waters are developed as a result of wilderness designation, such structures would not significantly affect re-establishment and water development activities. Therefore, this issue was not analyzed in this EIS.

7. Impacts on Wild Horse and Burro Management. This issue was identified several times during the development of the EIS. In particular, the Nevada Department of Wildlife voiced concerns that wilderness designation may not allow for proper management of wild horses and burros. Since the Wilderness Management Policy specifically allows for the management of viable herds of wild horses and burros, this issue will not be analyzed in the EIS.

8. Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Energy Resources. Energy resources were discussed in addition to locatable and salable mineral resources, during issue identification. This issue was dropped from further consideration as there is no favorability for oil and gas leases/applications in any of the five WSAs. Although three of the WSAs have a moderate favorability for geothermal resources, neither exploration nor development are expected due to an absence of activity and leases/applications. In addition, exploration and development of energy resources is not anticipated within any of the WSAs due to the great distances to economical markets.

9. Impacts on Military Overflights. During EIS development, the U.S. Air Force raised concerns pertaining to the effect wilderness designation would have on low-level military overflights. The Wilderness Management Policy does not prohibit low-level military overflights; therefore, this issue will not be analyzed in the EIS.

10. Impacts on Utility Corridors. The scoping process identified utility corridors as a potential issue. However, none of the WSAs are proximate to any designated or potential corridors; Silver Peak Range, the WSA closest to any utlity corridor, is more than 6 miles away from that corridor. Since there is adequate space to accomodate any existing or potential corridors outside the WSA, this issue will not be analyzed in the EIS.

11. Impacts on Communication Sites. One issue was raised which pertained to the effect that wilderness designation would have on location of communication facilities. There are no applications on file and no interest has been expressed for communication sites in any of the WSAs. In addition, adequate sites, both current and potential, are found outside the WSAs. Communication sites will not be affected by wilderness designation and therefore will not be analyzed in this EIS.

12. Impacts on Woodland Products. There are woodland products available in three of the WSAs. This issue was considered but dropped from analysis due to low demand for forest-products in the area and the availability of ample supplies outside of the WSAs. Historically, most harvest activities have taken place outside of the WSAs due to their remoteness and rugged terrain.

13. Impacts on Cultural Resources. Inventories and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer during scoping determined that no cultural sites eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are known to exist within any of the WSAs. Cultural resources in the areas would be protected with or without wilderness designation. Since the identified sites within the WSAs are of low sensitivity, the issue of impact to cultural resources from wilderness designation was dropped from further analysis.

14. Impact on Air Quality Classification. Concerns were raised regarding the interaction between wilderness designation and air quality classification. The Wilderness Management Policy states that BLM will manage all wilderness areas to comply with the existing air quality classification for that specific area; wilderness designation or nondesignation would not cause the air quality classification to change. Therefore, this issue was dropped from further analysis in the EIS.

15. Impacts on Threatened and Endangered Species. Wildlife and vegetation inventories and consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service did not identify any threatened or endangered species in the WSAs. Therefore, this issue was dropped from further consideration.

16. Impacts on National Park Service Wilderness Proposals. During scoping and again after their review of the draft EIS, the National Park Service (NPS) stated that those portions of the Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain WSAs adjacent to Death Valley National Monument should be recommended as suitable for wilderness. NPS considered those portions a logical extension of their administratively endorsed study areas within the Monument that would protect the integrity of their areas. However, during development of the EIS no activities were identified which would impact the qualities of the NPS's wilderness areas and therefore, impacts to the NPS wilderness proposals were not analyzed in the EIS.

Formulation Of Alternatives

Proposed Action

Development of the Proposed Action is guided by requirements of the Bureau's Planning Regulations, 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 1600. The BLM's Wilderness Study Policy (published February 3, 1982, in the Federal Register) supplements the planning regulations by providing the specific factors to be considered in developing suitability recommendations during the planning sequence.

The Proposed Action recommends as suitable for wilderness designation those WSAs, or portions of WSAs, with high quality wilderness values. It seeks a balanced approach of land use allocations that best meets the needs and objectives of multiple use management as identified by the planning process. The Proposed Action limits conflicts between the wilderness resource, mineral resources and motorized recreational uses.

Under the Proposed Action, 17,850 acres would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation in the Silver Peak Range WSA. Of the 17,850 acres recommended suitable, 16,666 acres are located within the WSA's original boundaries and 1,184 acres are lands located adjacent to the WSA's northwest boundary. The addition of these acres were included so as to establish a more easily recognizable boundary based on topography.

In the FEIS, the Proposed Action corresponds to the Preferred Alternative in the Draft RMP/EIS and remains the same as in the Draft. Table 1-2 provides a breakdown of suitable and unsuitable acreage by WSA by alternative.

Alternatives to the Proposed Action Selected for Analysis

The BLM Wilderness Study Policy calls for the formulation and evaluation of alternatives ranging from resource protection to resource production. The alternatives assessed in this EIS include: (1) a No Wilderness Alternative for each WSA; (2) an All Wilderness Alternative for each WSA; and (3) a Partial Wilderness Alternative(s) for three WSAs.

In this document, the No Action Alternative, as required by the National Environmental Protection Act, and the No Wilderness Alternative are equivalent. Both advocate continuation of management as outlined in the existing Management Framework Plan and recommends the WSA as nonsuitable for wilderness.

The All Wilderness Alternative represents the maximum possible acreage that could be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation.

Partial Wilderness Alternatives can make suitable or nonsuitable recommendations ranging between the All Wilderness and No Wilderness/No Action Alternatives. A Partial Wilderness Alternative can recommend as suitable for wilderness designation a portion less than the entire acreage of a WSA.

Under the Partial Wilderness Alternative for the Silver Peak Range WSA, 3,065 acres that were not part of the original WSA were included within the area recommended suitable for wilderness designation. These additional lands were included so as to establish a more easily recognizable boundary based on topography.

Alternatives Considered But Dropped From Further Analysis

One additional partial wilderness alternative was considered for the Grapevine Mountains WSA. Consideration of this alternative was initiated by the National Park Service, who proposed the adding of acreage to the southwest portion of the WSA. The BLM did not feel that it would aid in the management of the WSA or enhance existing wilderness values and therefore dropped this potential alternative from further consideration.

Table 1-2
ALTERNATIVES BY WSA

WSA/Alternative	Suitable Acres	Nonsuitable Acres
Silver Peak Range		
Proposed Action	17,850 1/	17,234
All Wilderness	33,900	0
No Wilderness	0	33,900
Alternative A	33,620 2/	3,345
Pigeon Spring		
Proposed Action	0	3,575
All Wilderness	3,575	0
Queer Mountain		
Proposed Action	0	81,550
All Wilderness	81,550	0
Alternative A	42,650	38,900
Grapevine Mountains		
Proposed Action	0	66,800
All Wilderness	66,800	0
Alternative A	23,150	43,650
Resting Spring Range		
Proposed Action	0	3,850
All Wilderness	3,850	0

1/ Includes 1,184 acres that were not part of the orginal WSA.
2/ Includes 3,065 acres that were not part of the original WSA.

CHAPTER 2
Proposed Action and Alternatives

CHAPTER 2

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Since the pattern of future actions within the WSAs cannot be predicted with certainty, assumptions were made to allow the analysis of impacts under the Proposed Action and Alternatives. These assumptions are the basis of the impacts identified in this EIS. They are not management plans or proposals, but represent feasible patterns of activities which would occur under the alternatives analyzed.

SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA (NV-060-338)

Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

The Proposed Action recommends 16,666 out of 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA as suitable for wilderness designation. In addition to the recommended suitable acreage of the WSA, an additional 1,184 acres adjacent to the area would also be recommended suitable under the Proposed Action. These acres were included so as to establish an easily recognizable boundary based on topography. The remaining 17,234 acres of the WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, 16,666 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA and 1,184 acres outside of the WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Approximately 2 mining claims are located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. These claims and any other mining claims that might exist at the time of designation would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

The 17,234 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 26 mining claims are located within the western, southern and eastern portions of the nonsuitable area.

Locatable Minerals

The largest portion of the recommended suitable area, about 85 percent, is considered to have moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, base metals, and tungsten. The entire suitable portion is considered to have low favorability for the occurrence of nonmetallic minerals. No mineralization has been established within the area and claim activity is minimal. Exploration and/or development of any potential minerals within this portion of the WSA is not projected to occur.

A portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, approximately 85 percent, indicates moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. A very small portion, approximately 10 percent, of the nonsuitable area indicates a high favorability for the occurrence of metallics. Exploration for and development of metallic minerals along the western and eastern borders of the nonsuitable area is projected to occur.

Exploration and development of existing claims for metallic minerals are projected to occur along the nonsuitable area's western boundary. Exploration would entail cross country use of low pressure wheeled vehicles and the construction of small drilling pads. An estimated 50 drill pads and 2.5 miles of road would support exploration efforts of these claims. Development of a small open pit gold mine is projected for these valid claims. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two and one-half miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. A total of 12 acres would be physically disturbed from exploration and development activity.

The exploration and development of existing claims for metallic minerals are also projected to occur along the nonsuitable area's eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. A projected medium size underground mine would be developed on these claims. Surface development would consist of a portal area and a decline. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA.

It is estimated that the portal area would consist of work pads, storage facilities and loading area and would disturb 10 acres. Waste deposition areas would disturb another five acres. Three miles of road would be constructed to the site disturbing an additional 9 acres. Total surface disturbance from this development would be 24 acres.

Salable Minerals

Saleable mineral exploration or development is not projected.

Recreation Management Actions

The 17,850-acre suitable portion of the Silver Peak Range WSA would be designated closed to motorized recreational use. Approximately 5 visits of motorized recreational use are estimated to occur annually within this area.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use such as hunting, backpacking, nature study/photography and hiking is projected to reach 170 visits annually within the recommended suitable portion.

The 17,234-acre portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, including 5.5 miles of projected road constructed for mineral development, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, wood harvesting, and hunting access. Motorized recreational use within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 100 visits annually. No recreational developments or facilities are proposed for the Silver Peak Range WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA under the Proposed Action. This use is estimated to remain below 80 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Silver Peak Range WSA lies within two grazing allotments; the Icehouse Allotment (winter) and the Silver Peak Allotment (year-long). Approximately 22 percent of the Icehouse Allotment (17,500 acres) and 5 percent of the Silver Peak Allotment (16,400 acres) are within the WSA. The entire Icehouse Allotment has an active preference of 1,203 AUMs and the Silver Peak Allotment has 5,973 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future.

No range developments exist and no new range developments are projected for the recommended suitable portion of the Silver Peak WSA.

Existing range developments within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA include only one abandoned water development located at Blind Spring. No new range developments are projected for this portion of the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been partially implemented on the area in which the WSA is found. This HMP would continue to be implemented throughout the entire WSA. One bighorn sheep water catchment consisting of two camouflaged 1,600-gallon water tanks and a corragated apron, would be located within the Piper Canyon area of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. No wildlife developments exist within the entire WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 33,900 acres of public land in the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, the 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Approximately 28 mining claims are located within the WSA. Those claims with plans of operation filed would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

Locatable Minerals

The majority of the WSA, (approximately 74 percent) is considered to have a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, base metals, and tungsten. A small portion of the study area, approximately 4 percent, located along the eastern border is considered to have a high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. The WSA indicates low favorability for the occurrence of non-metallics.

Exploration of existing claims for metallic minerals is projected to occur along the WSA's western boundary, and a valid discovery prior to designation of the WSA is expected. Exploration would entail cross country use of low pressure wheeled vehicles and the construction of small drilling pads. An estimated 50 drill pads and 2 miles of road would support exploration efforts of these claims. Development of a small open pit gold mine, is projected for these valid claims. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two and one-half miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. A total of 12 acres would be disturbed from exploration and mining activity.

The exploration and development of existing claims for metallic minerals are also projected to occur along the WSA's eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. It is assumed that a valid discovery would occur prior to designation which would initiate the development of a medium size underground mine. Development would consist of a portal area and a decline, with processing facilities located outside of the WSA. It is estimated that the portal area would consist of work pads, storage facilities and loading area and would disturb ten acres. Waste deposition areas would disturb another five acres. Three miles of road would be constructed to the site disturbing an additional nine acres. Total surface disturbance from this development would be 24 acres.

Salable Minerals

Saleable mineral exploration or development is not projected.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be closed to motorized recreational pursuits such as off-road vehicle sightseeing, recreational prospecting, wood harvesting, vehicle camping, and hunting access; thus eliminating approximately 40 visits of motorized recreational use annually.

The Silver Peak Range WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow non-motorized recreational pursuits such as hunting, hiking, backpacking, and nature study. Visitation into the area is projected to reach 280 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Silver Peak Range WSA lies within two grazing allotments; the Icehouse Allotment (winter) and the Silver Peak Allotment (year-long). Approximately 22 percent of the Icehouse Allotment (17,500 acres) and 5 percent of the Silver Peak Allotment (16,400 acres) are within the WSA. The entire Icehouse Allotment has an active preference of 1,203 AUMs and the Silver Peak Allotment has 5,973 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. One abandoned water development is found at Blind Spring. No new range developments are projected for the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been partially implemented on the area in which the WSA is found. This HMP would continue to be implemented within the WSA. One bighorn sheep water catchment, consisting of two camouflaged fiberglass 1,600-gallon tanks and a corragated apron, would be located within the Piper Canyon area of the WSA. No wildlife projects presently exist within the WSA.

No Wilderness Alternative (No Action Alternative)

All 33,900 acres of public land in the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and management of the area would proceed as identified in the land use plan (see Alternatives Maps).

Mineral Resources Actions

The 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Approximately 28 mining claims are located within the WSA.

Locatable Minerals

The majority of the WSA (approximately 74 percent) indicates moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. A very small portion (approximately 4 percent) of the WSA indicates a high favorability for the occurrence of metallics. Exploration for and development of metallic minerals along the western and eastern borders of the WSA are projected to occur. The WSA indicates low favorability for the occurrence of non-metallics.

Exploration of existing claims for metallic minerals is projected to occur along the WSA's western boundary and a valid discovery is expected. Exploration would entail cross country use of low pressure wheeled vehicles and the construction of small drilling pads. An estimated 50 drill pads and 2 miles of road would support exploration efforts on these claims. Development of a small open pit gold mine is projected for these valid claims. Development activities would disturb 1 acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two and one-half miles of road would be developed along the routes previously used for exploration. A total of 12 acres would be disturbed from this mining activity.

The exploration and development of existing claims for metallic minerals are also projected to occur along the WSA's eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. A projected medium size underground mine would be developed on these claims. Surface development would consist of a portal area and a decline. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA. It is estimated that the portal area would consist of work pads, storage facilities and loading area and would disturb 10 acres. Waste deposition areas would disturb another 5 acres. Three miles of road would be constructed to the site disturbing an additional nine acres. Total surface disturbance from this development would be 24 acres.

Salable Minerals

Saleable mineral exploration or development is not projected.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA, including 5.5 miles of new roads constructed for mineral exploration and development and .5 mile of existing road, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, wood harvesting, and hunting access. This motorized type of use is projected to reach 100 visits annually within the WSA. No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the WSA and is projected to reach 245 visits annually under the No Wilderness Alternative. This non-motorized type of use includes primitive camping, hiking, backpacking, nature study and photography.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Silver Peak Range WSA lies within two grazing allotments; the Icehouse Allotment (winter) and the Silver Peak Allotment (year-long). Approximately 22 percent of the Icehouse Allotment (17,500 acres) and 5 percent of the Silver Peak Allotment (16,400 acres) are within the WSA. The entire Icehouse Allotment has an active preference of 1,203 AUMs and the Silver Peak Allotment has 5,973 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. One abandoned water development is found at Blind Spring. No new range developments are projected for the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been partially implemented on the area in which the WSA is found. This HMP would continue to be implemented throughout the entire WSA. One bighorn sheep water catchment consisting of two camouflaged 1,600-gallon water tanks and a corragated apron, would be located within the Piper Canyon area of the WSA. No wildlife developments exist within the entire WSA.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 33,620 acres would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Included in this figure are 3,065 acres that were not part of the original WSA. These additional acres were included so as to establish a more recognizable boundary based on topography. The remaining 3,345 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, 33,620 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Approximately 23 mining claims are located within the the area recommended

as suitable for wilderness designation under Alternative A. These claims and any other mining claims that might exist at the time of designation would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

The 3,345 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about five mining claims are located within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Locatable Minerals

The largest portion of the recommended suitable area (approximately 74 percent) is considered to have moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, base metals, and tungsten. A very small portion, approximately 4 percent, of the suitable area is considered to have a high favorability for the occurrence of metallics. The entire suitable portion is considered to have low favorability for the occurrence of nonmetallic minerals. Exploration and development of potential metallic minerals within this portion of the WSA are projected to occur.

Exploration and development of claims for metallic minerals are projected to occur along the suitable area's western boundary. Exploration would entail cross country use of low pressure wheeled vehicles and the construction of small drilling pads. An estimated 50 drill pads and 2 miles of road would support exploration efforts of these claims. Development of a small open pit gold mine, is projected for these valid claims. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two and one-half miles of road would be developed along the routes previously used for exploration. One-half of a mile of road would cross a portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable. A total of 11.25 acres of surface disturbance would occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA from this mining activity.

The exploration and development of existing claims for metallic minerals are also projected to occur along the suitable area's eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. A projected medium size underground mine would be developed on these claims. Surface development would consist of a portal area and a decline. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA. It estimated that the portal area would consist of work pads, storage facilities and loading area and would disturb 10 acres. Waste deposition areas would disturb another five acres. Two and one-half miles of road would be constructed to the site. One-half mile of the road would cross the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and the remaining 2 miles would exist within the suitable portion of the WSA. A total of 8.25 acres of surface would be disturbed within the suitable portion of the WSA from the construction of this road. Total surface disturbance within the suitable area from this mining activity would be 23.25 acres.

All but the southern portion of the area recommended nonsuitable indicates a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Mineral activity within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would be minimal, due to the overflow of exploration and/or development occuring along the western and eastern boundaries of the suitable area. A .5 mile access road along the western border and a .5 mile access road along the eastern border would be constructed thru the nonsuitable area as support for mineral exploration and development projected to take place within the recommended suitable area. Total disturbance would be 1.5 acres.

Salable Minerals

Saleable mineral exploration and development is not projected.

Recreation Management Actions

Under Alternative A, the 33,620-acre area recommended suitable (included are 3,065 acres outside the WSA) would be designated closed to motorized recreational use. Approximately 30 visits of motorized recreational use are estimated to occur annually within this area.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use such as hunting, backpacking, nature study/photography and hiking is projected to reach 300 visits annually within the recommended suitable portion.

The 3,345-acre portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, including 1 mile of projected road constructed for mineral development and .5 mile of existing road, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, wood harvesting, and hunting access. Motorized recreational use within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 50 visits annually. No recreational developments or facilities are proposed for the Silver Peak Range WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA under Alternative A. This use is estimated to remain below 10 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Silver Peak Range WSA lies within two grazing allotments; the Icehouse Allotment (winter) and the Silver Peak Allotment (year-long). Approximately 22 percent of the Icehouse Allotment (17,500 acres) and 5 percent of the Silver Peak Allotment (16,400 acres) are within the WSA. The entire Icehouse Allotment has an active preference of 1,203 AUMs and the Silver Peak Allotment has 5,973 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future.

One abandoned range development exists at Blind Spring within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. No new range developments are projected for the recommended suitable portion of the Silver Peak Range WSA.

No range developments exist and none are planned within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the Silver Peak Range WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

A Habitat Management Plan (HMP) has been partially implemented on the area in which the WSA is found. This HMP would continue to be implemented throughout the entire WSA. One bighorn sheep water catchment consisting of two camouflaged 1,600-gallon water tanks and a corragated apron, would be located within the Piper Canyon area of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. No wildlife developments exist within the entire WSA.

Summary of Impacts

Table 2-1 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives in the Silver Peak Range WSA.

PIGEON SPRING WSA (NV-060-350)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

All 3,575 acres of public land in the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and management of the area would proceed as identified in the land use plan (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

The 3,575 acres of the Pigeon Spring WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 31 mining claims are located within the WSA.

Locatable Minerals

The entire WSA is considered to have a high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, placer gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten, lead and zinc. Mineral exploration for metallic minerals is projected to occur within the WSA as metal prices move upward. Exploration of existing mining claims could involve the drilling of up to 10 holes per year, disturbing .5 acres over a ten year period. A track mounted drill rig would cross one mile of the study area. Total surface disturbance from exploration would be 2 acres.

Salable Minerals

No exploration or development activities are expected for salable minerals due to their low favorability and distance to market.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action the entire WSA, including 1 mile of vehicle tracks associated with projected mineral exploration and 6 existing ways, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle driving, vehicle camping, wood harvesting, recreational prospecting, and hunting access. Presently, motorized recreational use within the WSA is estimated to be approximately 60 visits annually. This recreational use is projected to reach 130 visits annually, under the Proposed Action. No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the Pigeon Spring WSA.

TABLE 2-1

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/PARTIAL WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Wilderness Values	The result of designating the suitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve the excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the highly scenic and geologic values of the Silver Peak caldera area and Icehouse Canyon. However, wilderness values of naturalness and solitude would be slightly impaired along the suitable area's northeast and northwest borders due to mineral activity projected to occur within the adjacent nonsuitable area. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and primitive recreation would be negetatively impaired within approximately 3,734 acres of the nonsuitable area. These impacts would be concentrated along the periphery of the nonsuitable area. The disturbances would be related to projected mineral exploration and development activities, off-road motorized vehicle use and wood harvesting. The remaining 13,500 acres of the nonsuitable portion would retain their wilderness values. The WSA's special features of bighorn sheep and wildhorses would experience negligible impacts. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and Silver Peak caldera would be preserved.	The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve the scenic and natural qualities of the WSA. The outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation as well as the special features of the Silver Peak caldera and Icehouse and Piper Canyons, would be retained. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road recreational vehicle use would impair naturalness values and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation over approximately 1,500 acres of the WSA.	Under the No Wilderness Alternative, wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be diminished and, in some instances, lost within 3,734 acres of the WSA, due to projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreational activities. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 30,166 acres of the WSA. The special features of bighorn sheep and wildhorses would experience negligible impacts. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained.	Wilderness values of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation and special features would be retained within 32,620 of the 33,620 acres of the recommended suitable portion. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,000 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished and, in some instances lost due to projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on the 3,345 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The scenic and geological values of the WSA's special features of bighorn sheep, wildhorses, Icehouse and Piper Canyons and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained.

TABLE 2-1 (Continued)

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/PARTIAL WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use	Approximately five visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 17,850 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impact of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	Motorized recreational use of 40 visits annually that occurs within the WSA at present would be foregone. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	Motorized recreational use within the WSA would reach 100 visits annually. This use would benefit as a result of the entire WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no impact to motorized recreational use.	Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 33,620 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Approximately 30 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources	Exploration and development of valid existing claims are projected in the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected for development within this portion of the WSA. Impacts on mineral resources is not expected.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur. No other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected to occur. No adverse impacts to mineral resources are projected.	Under the No Wilderness Alternative, exploration of existing mining claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic resources are projected to occur within the WSA. There are no projected adverse impacts on the exploration for and development of mineral resources.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. Exploration of valid existing claims and the development of two mines are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. Therefore no impacts would occur.

TABLE 2-1 (Continued)

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/PARTIAL WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	NO WILDERNESS/NO ACTION	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Water Sources	For those five springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Of the three springs located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, one would be adversely impacted due to surface-disturbing activities. No adverse impacts are projected for the remaining two springs located within the nonsuitable area.	Seven of the eight springs located within the WSA would retain their water quality stability due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Water quality at one spring would be degraded as a result of projected road construction/mineral development activities.	Water quality stability in one of the eight springs within the WSA would be adversely impacted by surface-disturbing activities associated with mineral development projected to take place within the study area.	For those seven springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Water quality stability of one spring, located within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA, would be adversely impacted by siltation resulting from projected mineral development activities.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the WSA and is projected to reach 20 visits annually under the Proposed Action. This non-motorized type of use includes primitive camping, hiking, backpacking, nature study and photography.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Pigeon Spring WSA lies within one grazing allotment, the Magruder Mountain Allotment (year-long). Approximately .06 percent of the Magruder Mountain Allotment (3,575 acres) lies within the WSA. The entire Magruder Mountain Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for this WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 3,575 acres of public land in the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, the 3,575 acres of the Pigeon Spring WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 31 mining claims are located within the WSA. Those claims having plans of operation filed would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

Locatable Minerals

The entire WSA is considered to have a high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, placer gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten, lead and zinc. Mineral exploration for metallic minerals is projected to occur within the WSA as metal prices move upward. Exploration of existing claims prior to designation would involve drilling approximately 50 holes, disturbing .25 acres. A tracked mounted drill rig would cross one-half mile of the study area. Total surface disturbance from exploration would be 1 acre. Exploration for and development of metallic resources within the WSA are not projected to occur after wilderness designation of the study area.

Salable Minerals

No exploration or development activites are expected for salable minerals due to their low favorability and distance to market.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be closed to motorized recreational pursuits such as off-road vehicle driving, hunting access, vehicle camping and recreational prospecting; eliminating approximately 60 visits of motorized recreational use annually.

The Pigeon Spring WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow non-motorized (primitive) recreational pursuits such as hunting, backpacking, hiking, and nature study. Visitation into the area is projected to reach 40 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Pigeon Spring WSA lies within one grazing allotment, the Magruder Mountain Allotment (year-long). Approximately .06 percent of the Magruder Mountain Allotment (3,575 acres) lies within the WSA. The entire Magruder Mountain Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for this WSA.

Summary of Impacts

Table 2-2 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives in the Pigeon Spring WSA.

QUEER MOUNTAIN WSA (NV-060-354)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

All 81,550 acres of public land in the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and management of the area would proceed as identified in the land use plan (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

The 81,550 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 172 mining claims are located within the study area's northern end.

Locatable Minerals

Two areas constituting about 43 percent of the WSA are classified as having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver and base metals. These areas are located in the northern third and southeast corner of the unit. The remainder of the WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallics.

TABLE 2-2

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
PIGEON SPRING WSA

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Wilderness Values	The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation that exist within the 2,138-acre unnatural portion of the WSA would be diminished. The naturalness values and limited opportunities that exist for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the central-core (1,437 acres) of the WSA under no wilderness designation. No special features or points of interests were found to exist within the WSA.	Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,437 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. Less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist on the remaining 2,138 acres. Projected mineral exploration activities and uncontrolable motorized vehicle use would continue to degrade any natural qualities that exist on these lands. No special features or points of interest were found to exist within the WSA.
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use	Motorized recreational use will benefit as a result of the entire WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.	Motorized recreational use of 60 visits that occurs within the WSA at present would be foregone. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources	Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims is projected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. There would be no impacts on the exploration or development of mineral resources.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. Exploration to prove validity of existing claims is projected to take place prior to designation, reducing the exploratory drilling from 100 drill holes under nondesignation to 50 drill holes. Mineral discovery and development are not expected to occur.

Exploration of several existing claims for metallic minerals is projected within the Gold Mountain area. This activity would involve cross-county travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, transversing 2 miles of the WSA and the construction of 150 drill pads. It is projected that an eventual discovery would initiate the development of a small open pit gold mine. Development activities would disturb 1 acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. A total of 11.2 acres would be physically disturbed from mineral exploration and development activity. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to the occurrence of sand and gravel. No activity is projected due to the WSAs distance to market.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action the entire WSA, including 2 miles of new road constructed for mineral exploration and development and 8 miles of existing ways, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle driving, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and hunting access. Presently, motorized recreational use within the WSA is estimated to be approximately 175 visits annually. This recreational use is projected to reach 315 visits annually, under the Proposed Action. No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the Queer Mountain WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the WSA and is projected to reach 130 visits annually under the Proposed Action. Non-motorized types of use include primitive camping, hiking, backpacking, nature study and photography.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Queer Mountain WSA lies within one grazing allotment, the Magruder Mountain Allotment (year-long). Approximately 13 percent of the Magruder Mountain Allotment (81,550 acres) lies within the WSA. The entire Magruder Mountain Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Queer Mountain WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for the WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 81,550 acres of public land in the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, the 81,550 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 172 mining claims are located within the northern portion of the WSA. Those claims having plans of operation filed would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

Locatable Minerals

Two areas constituting about 43 percent of the WSA are classified as having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver and base metals. These areas are located in the northern third and southeast corner of the WSA. The remainder of the WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallics.

Limited exploration of several existing claims for metallic minerals is projected within the Gold Mountain area prior to designation. However, a discovery on these claims prior to designation of the WSA as wilderness is not projecteded to occur. Exploration activity would involve drilling approximately 75 holes, disturbing .4 acres. A low pressure wheeled vehicle would cross 1.5 miles of the study area. Total surface disturbance from exploration would be 2.5 acres.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to the occurrence of sand and gravel. No activity is expected due to the WSA's distance to market.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be closed to motorized recreational pursuits such as off-road vehicle driving, recreational prospecting, vehicle camping, and hunting access; eliminating approximately 175 visits of motorized recreational use annually.

The Queer Mountain WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow non-motorized recreational pursuits such as hunting, hiking, backpacking, and nature study/photography. Visitation into the area is projected to reach 150 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Queer Mountain WSA lies within one grazing allotment, the Magruder Mountain Allotment (year-long). Approximately 13 percent of the Magruder Mountain Allotment (81,550 acres) lies within the WSA. The entire Magruder Mountain Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present, there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Queer Mountain WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for the WSA.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

A portion of the Queer Mountain WSA, 42,650 out of 81,550 acres, would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 38,900 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, 42,650 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. One mining claim is located along the northern boundary of the area recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Those mining claims having plans of operation filed at the time of designation would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

The 38,900 acres of the Queer Moutain WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, 171 mining claims are located within the northern portion of the nonsuitable area.

Locatable Minerals

The northern and southeastern portion of the recommended suitable area, about 28 percent, is considered to have a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver and base metal. The remainder of the suitable area is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. No exploration or development of mining claims located in the suitable portion of the WSA is projected to occur.

The majority of the northern portion, as well as the eastern corner of the nonsuitable area (54 percent), is considered to have a moderate favorability for metallic minerals, gold, silver and bulk metals. Exploration and development of several existing claims for metallic minerals within the Gold Mountain area are projected. Exploration activity would involve cross-country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles transversing two miles of the WSA and construction of 150 drill pads. An eventual discovery would initiate the development of a small open pit gold mine. Development would disturb 1 acre of land for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. A total of 11.2 acres of surface disturbance would occur from mineral exploration and development activities. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to the occurrence of sand and gravel. Exploration and development of salable minerals are not expected due to lack of demand and distance to market.

Recreation Management Actions

Under Alternative A, the 42,650-acre area recommended suitable would be designated closed to motorized recreational use. Approximately 35 visits of motorized recreational use are estimated to occur annually within this area.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use such as hunting, backpacking, nature study/photography and hiking is projected to reach 100 visits annually within the recommended suitable portion.

The 38,900-acre portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, including 2 miles of road constructed for mineral development and 6 miles of existing ways, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle driving, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and hunting access. Motorized recreational use within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 280 visits annually. No recreational developments or facilities are proposed for the Queer Mountain WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA under Alternative A. This use is estimated to remain below 30 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Queer Mountain WSA lies within one grazing allotment, the Magruder Mountain Allotment (year-long). Approximately 13 percent of the Magruder Mountain Allotment (81,550 acres) lies within the WSA. The entire Magruder Mountain Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the Queer Mountain WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for the WSA.

Summary of Impacts

Table 2-3 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives in the Queer Mountain WSA.

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS WSA (NV-060-355)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

All 66,800 acres of public land in the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and management of the area would proceed as identified in the land use plan (see Alternatives Maps).

TABLE 2-3

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
QUEER MOUNTAIN WSA

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 35,600 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost due to audio, visual and surface disturbances created by increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 45,950 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.	The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, and to enhance opportunities to view deer and wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qulaities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 13,000 acres of the WSA.	Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation would be retained within 41,450 of the 42,650 acres of the recommended suitable area. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,200 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 34,400 of the 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The WSA's special features, including populations of deer and wildhorses, would not be adversely impacted.

TABLE 2-3 (Continued)

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use	Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no adverse impact to motorized recreational use.	Motorized recreational use of 175 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 42,650 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation and approximately 35 visits would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources	Exploration of existing claims and the development of one open pit gold mine are projected to occur within the WSA. There are no projected impacts on exploration for or development of mineral resources.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The 150 exploratory holes expected to be drilled if designation does not occur would be reduced to 75 holes if designation occurs. The projected development of one open pit gold mine would be foregone under this alternative.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. Exploration of existing claims and the development of one small gold mine are projected to occur within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. No adverse impacts to mineral exploration and development are projected to occur within the WSA.

Mineral Resources Actions

The 66,800 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 3 mining claims are located within the study area's center and about 73 claims are located along the southern boundary.

Locatable Minerals

The southern portion of the mountainous terrain, about 30 percent of the WSA, is considered to have a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals due to the occurrence of favorable rock types. The remainder of the WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallics.

Existing claims in the Helmet Mountain area are expected to prove valid prior to designation of the WSA. Projected exploration for metallic minerals would involve cross country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, crossing up to 5 miles of the WSA, and the construction of up to 100 drill pads. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Five miles of road would be developed along routes previously used for exploration. A total of 19.5 acres would be physically disturbed from mineral exploration and development activity. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to sand and gravel deposits. Deposits have been utilized at four sites by the State Highway Department in past years. Although ample reserves exist outside the WSA boundary, it is likely that use of gravel pits located on the bajada would continue. Total disturbance from the four sites would be 160 acres.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the Proposed Action, the entire WSA, including five miles of projected road associated with mineral exploration and development, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and hunting access. Presently, motorized recreational use within the WSA is estimated to be approximately 130 visits annually. This recreational use is projected to reach 260 visits annually, under the Proposed Action. No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the WSA and is projected to reach 100 visits annually under the Proposed Action. Non-motorized types of use include primitive camping, hiking, backpacking, nature study and photography.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Grapevine Mountains WSA lies within two actively grazed allotments; the Magruder Allotment (year-long) and the Montezuma Allotment (year-long). Approximately 6 percent of the Magruder Allotment (39,000 acres) and 5 percent of the Montezuma Allotment (27,800 acres) lie within the WSA. The entire Magruder Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs and the Montezuma Allotment has an active preference of 10,900 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. Two miles of existing boundary fence are located within the WSA and are easily maintained without motorized vehicles. No range developments are proposed in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present, there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for this WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 66,800 acres of public land in the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, the 66,800 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 76 mining claims are located within the WSA. Those claims having plans of operation filed would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

Locatable Minerals

The southern portion of the mountainous terrain, about 30 percent of the WSA, is considered to have a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals due to the occurrence of favorable rock types. The remainder of the WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallics.

Existing claims in the Helmet Mountain area are expected to prove valid prior to designation of the WSA. Projected exploration for metallic minerals would involve cross country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, crossing up to 5 miles of the WSA, and the construction of up to 100 drill pads. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Five miles of road would be developed along the routes previously used for exploration. A total of 19.5 acres would be physically disturbed from mineral exploration and development activity. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to sand and gravel deposits. Deposits have been utilized at four sites by the State Highway Department in past years. Although ample reserves of sand and gravel exist outside the WSA, it is likely that use of gravel pits located on the bajada would continue. Total disturbance from the four sites would be 160 acres.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be closed to motorized recreational pursuits such as off-road vehicle driving, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and hunting access; eliminating approximately 130 visits of motorized recreational use annually.

The Grapevine Mountains WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow non-motorized (primitive) recreational pursuits such as hunting, hiking, and nature study. Visitation into the area is projected to reach 130 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Grapevine Mountains WSA lies within two actively grazed allotments; the Magruder Allotment (year-long) and the Montezuma Allotment (year-long). Approximately 6 percent of the Magruder Allotment (39,000 acres) and 5 percent of the Montezuma Allotment (27,800 acres) lie within the WSA. The entire Magruder Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs and the Montezuma Allotment has an active preference of 10,900 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future. Two miles of existing boundary fence are located within the WSA and are easily maintained without motorized vehicles. No range developments are proposed in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present, there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for this WSA.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 23,150 acres out of 66,880 acres, would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The remaining 43,650 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, 23,150 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 56 mining claims are located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. These claims and any other mining claims that might exist at the time of designation would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

The 43,650 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. Presently, about 20 mining claims are located within the portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable.

Locatable Minerals

The southern portion of the recommended suitable area, about 30 percent, is considered to have a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals due to the occurrence of favorable rock types. The remainder of the area is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallics.

Existing claims in the Helmet Mountain area are expected to prove valid prior to designation of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. Projected exploration for metallic minerals would involve cross country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, crossing up to two miles of the recommended suitable area and the construction of up to 100 drill pads.

Projected development activities would physically disturb 1 acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Five miles of road would be developed along the routes previously used for exploration. Three of the 5 miles of road would cross the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. A total of 11 acres would be physically disturbed within the suitable portion from this mineral activity. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA.

The nonsuitable portion of the WSA indicates moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals (approximately 25 percent) and moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals (approximately 80 percent). Exploration and or development of any potential minerals within this portion of the WSA are not projected to occur. However, 3 miles of road disturbing 8.5 acres, would be constructed across the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as access support for mineral exploration and development occuring in the recommended suitable area.

Salable Minerals

The bajadas of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA have a moderate favorability for nonmetallic minerals due to sand and gravel deposits. Deposits have been utilized at four sites by the State Highway Department in past years. Although ample reserves exist outside the WSA boundary, it is likely that use of gravel pits located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would continue. Total physical disturbance from the four sites would be 160 acres.

Recreation Management Actions

Under Alternative A, the 23,150-acre area recommended suitable would be designated closed to motorized recreational use. Approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use are estimated to occur annually within this area.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use such as hunting, backpacking, nature study/photography and hiking is projected to reach 90 visits annually within the recommended suitable portion.

The 43,650-acre portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, including 3 miles of projected road associated with mineral development, would remain open for motorized recreational use. This motorized use includes off-road vehicle sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting and hunting access. Motorized recreational use within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 230 visits annually. No recreational developments or facilities are proposed for the Grapevine Mountains WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA under Alternative A. This use is estimated to remain below 30 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The entire Grapevine Mountains WSA lies within two actively grazed allotments; the Magruder Allotment (year-long) and the Montezuma Allotment (year-long). Approximately 6 percent of the Magruder Allotment (39,000 acres) and 5 percent of the Montezuma Allotment (27,800 acres) lie within the WSA. The entire Magruder Allotment has an active preference of 12,340 AUMs and the Montezuma Allotment has an active preference of 10,900 AUMs. Current grazing levels are not expected to change in the future.

No range developments exist and none are planned within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA.

Two miles of existing boundary fence are located within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. No new range developments are proposed for this portion of the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitiat improvements for this WSA.

Summary of Impacts

Table 2-4 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives in the Grapevine Mountains WSA.

RESTING SPRING RANGE WSA (NV-050-460)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

All 3,850 acres of public land in the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and management of the area would proceed as identified in the land use plan (see Alternatives Map).

TABLE 2-4

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS WSA

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 38,000 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost due to audio, visual and surface disturbances created from increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 28,800 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.	The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and to enhance the protection of wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qualities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 10,000 acres of the WSA.	Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude would be retained within 21,750 of the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,400 acres of the suitable area would be diminished by projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 37,300 acres of the nonsuitable area because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and projected mineral activities. Wilderness values would be retained on the remaining 6,350 acres of the recommended nonsuitable area. The population of wildhorses that inhabitat the WSA would not be adversely impacted.
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use	Motorized recreational use would be the benefiting activity as a result of the entire WSA remaining open to vehicles and the development of new access routes associated with mineral activity. No adverse impacts to this use are expected to occur.	Motorized recreational use of 130 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.	Approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

TABLE 2-4 (Continued)

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS	ALTERNATIVE A/PARTIAL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources	Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims and development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the WSA. Sand and gravel deposits would be extracted along the WSA's western boundary. There are no projected adverse impacts on the exploration for and development of mineral resources.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims, the development of one mine for metallic minerals and the extraction of sand and gravel are projected to occur within the WSA under the All Wilderness Alternative. As no other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected, impacts to the development of valid existing claims would not occur.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. As exploration of valid existing claims and the development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, no impacts would occur. Extraction of sand and gravel resources would occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Mineral Resources Actions

The 3,850 acres of the Resting Spring Range WSA recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. At present no deposits, prospects, or claims are known to exist within the WSA.

The entire WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallic and nonmetallic minerals. There are no known strategic or critical minerals in the WSA. Exploration and/or development is not projected to occur within the WSA.

Recreation Management Actions

Management of the Resting Spring Range WSA under the Proposed Action would provide a setting for motorized types of recreation. This would include dirt biking, off-road vehicle driving and sightseeing. The area is conducive to motorized types of recreation because of its accessible terrain consisting of wide, sandy washes and relative flat topography. Presently, motorized recreational use within the WSA is estimated to be approximately 55 visits annually. This recreational use is projected to reach 100 visits annually, under the Proposed Action. No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the WSA.

Non-motorized (primitive) recreational use would continue to occur within the WSA and is projected to reach 20 visits annually under the Proposed Action. Non-motorized types of use would primarily consist of backpacking and hiking access into the main body of the Resting Spring Mountain Range located in California.

Livestock Grazing Management

The Resting Spring WSA contains 460 acres of the Grapevine-Rock Valley allotment. This represents approximately seven percent of the entire allotment. This allotment has not been utilized for over 10 years and it is unlikely that any use would occur in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan (HMP) for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for the WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

All 3,850 acres of public land in the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation (see Alternatives Map).

Mineral Resources Actions

Subject to valid existing rights, the 3,850 acres of the Resting Spring Range WSA recommended as suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of appropriation under the mineral leasing and mining laws. No mining claims are located within the WSA at present. However, any claims staked and having plans of operation filed before designation would be examined to determine validity. Plans of operation for development of claims that exist at the time of designation would be processed in accordance with existing regulations.

The entire WSA is considered to have a low favorability for the occurrence of metallic and nonmetallic minerals. There are no known strategic or critical minerals in the WSA. Exploration and/or development of minerals in the WSA is not projected.

Recreation Management Actions

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be closed to motorized recreational pursuits, such as dirt biking, off-road vehicle driving, and hunting access; eliminating an estimated 55 visits of motorized recreational use annually.

The Resting Spring Range WSA would be managed to provide a primitive setting to allow non-motorized (primitive) recreational pursuits such as hunting, hiking, and nature study. Visitation into the area is projected to reach 30 visits annually.

Livestock Grazing Management

The Resting Spring WSA contains 460 acres of the Grapevine-Rock Valley allotment. This represents approximately seven percent of the entire allotment. This allotment has not been utilized for over 10 years and it is unlikely that any use would occur in the future. There are no existing or proposed range developments in the WSA.

Wildlife Management Actions

At present there is no Habitat Management Plan for the WSA and future planning is not foreseen. There are no existing or proposed wildlife habitat improvements for the WSA.

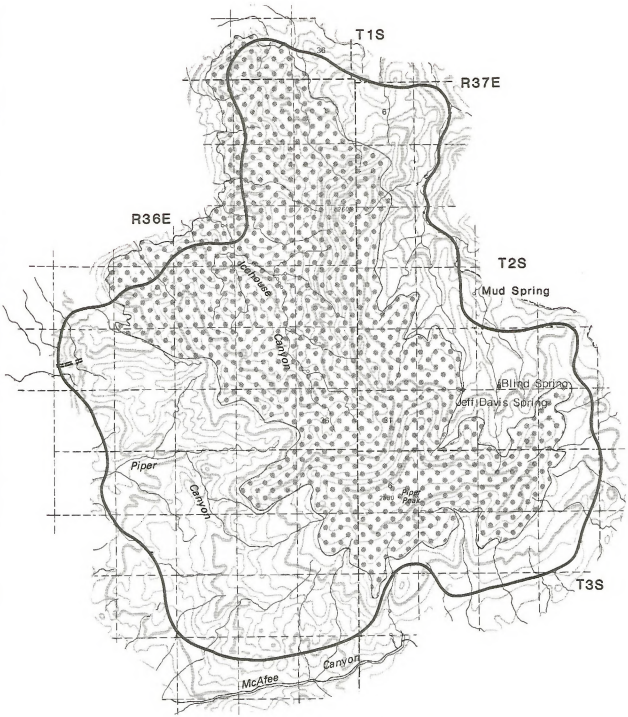
Summary of Impacts

Table 2-5 summarizes the impacts of the alternatives in the Resting Spring Range WSA.

TABLE 2-5

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS
RESTING SPRING RANGE WSA

IMPACT TOPIC	PROPOSED ACTION/NO WILDERNESS	ALL WILDERNESS
Impacts on Wilderness Values	Limited wilderness value of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost within the WSA. However, the values lost do not meet the minimum wilderness criteria. No special features were found to exist within the WSA.	Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,400 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and naturalness values that exist on the remaining 2,450 acres would be diminished and/or lost due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. No special features exist within the WSA.
Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use	Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.	Motorized recreational use of 55 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.
Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources	Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development; however, neither are expected to occur. There would be no impact on the exploration for and development of mineral resources.	Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed land within the WSA. No exploration or development of mineral resources is expected within the WSA; consequently, no impacts would occur.



PROPOSED ACTION (Partial)

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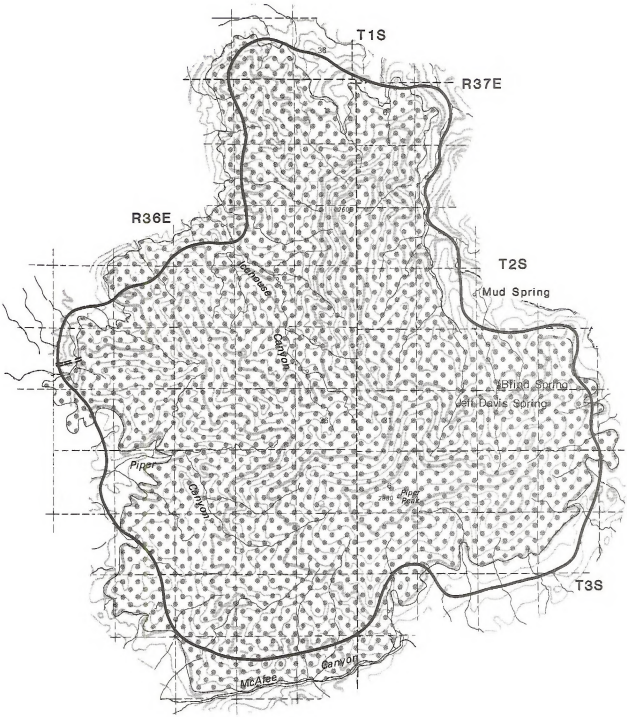
APPROXIMATE MILES

=== CHERRY STEM WAY

ALTERNATIVES
SILVER PEAK RANGE 060-338



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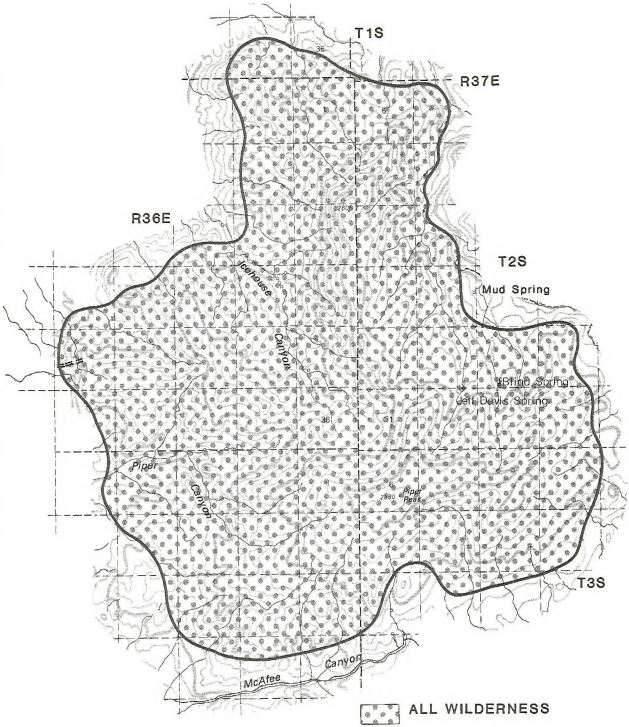
APPROXIMATE MILES

ALTERNATIVE A (Partial)

=== CHERRY STEM WAY

ALTERNATIVES
SILVER PEAK RANGE 060-338



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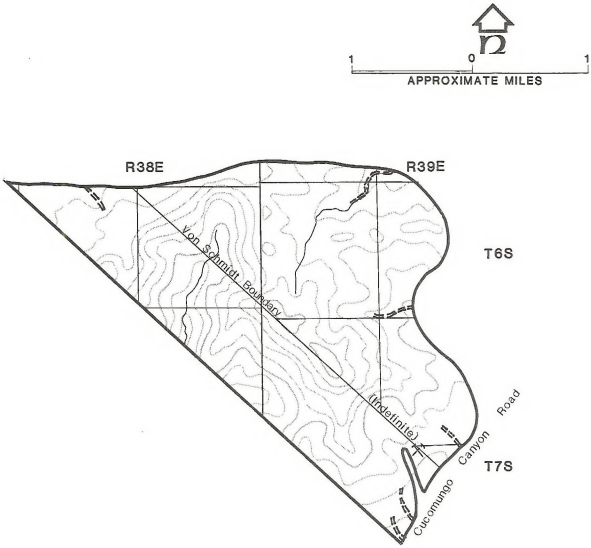
APPROXIMATE MILES

=== CHERRY STEM WAY

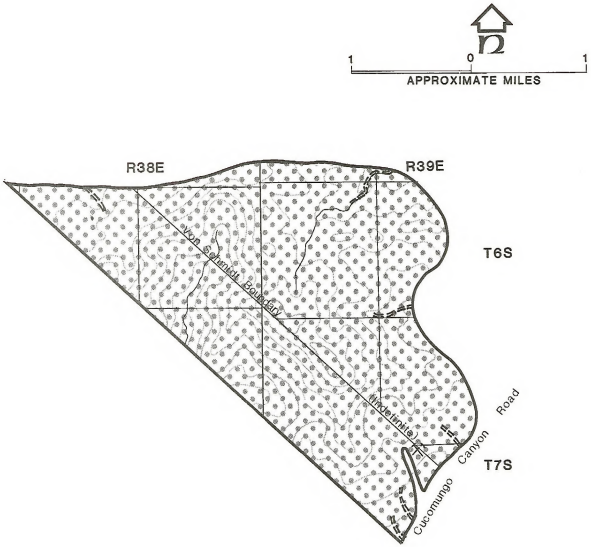
ALTERNATIVES
SILVER PEAK RANGE 060-338



PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness)

CHERRY STEM WAY

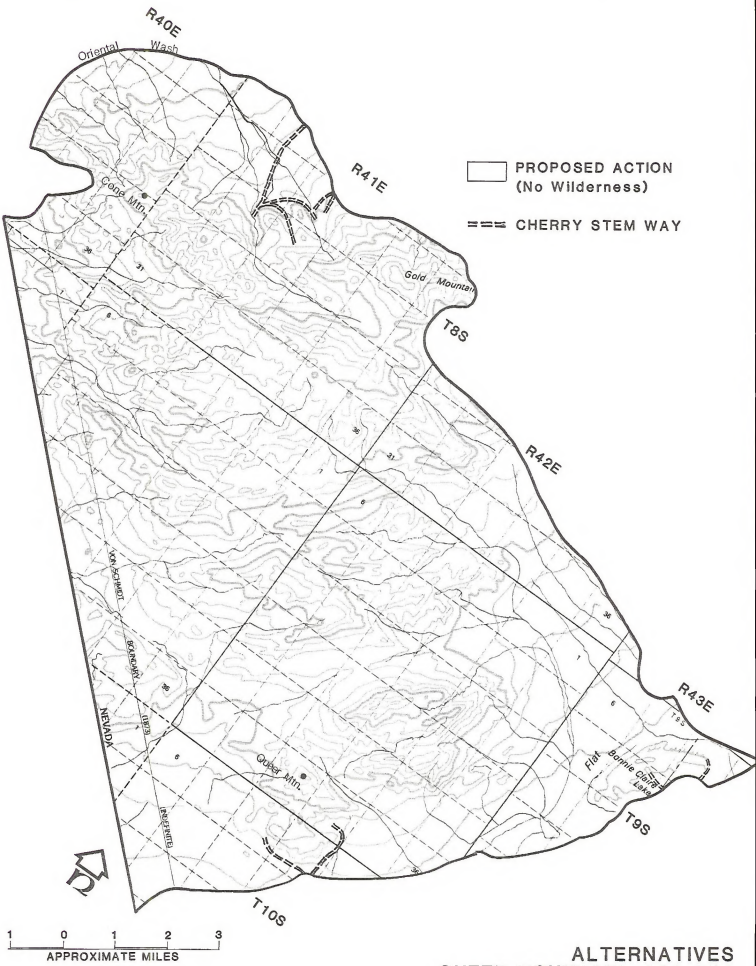
ALTERNATIVES
PIGEON SPRING 060-350



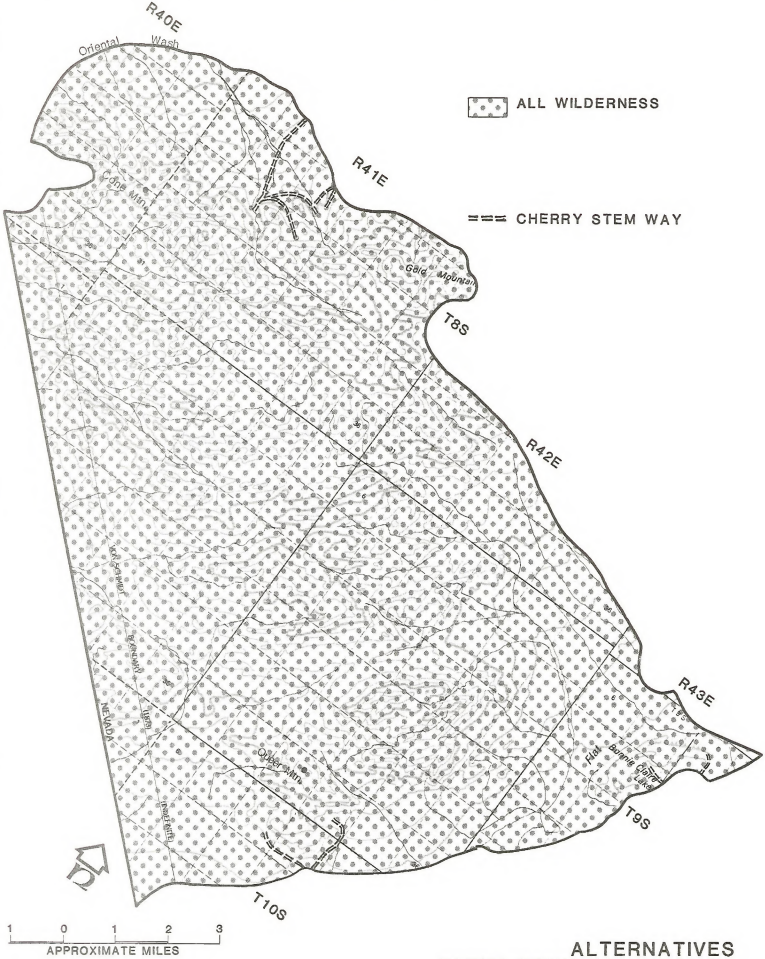
ALL WILDERNESS

=== CHERRY STEM WAY

ALTERNATIVES
PIGEON SPRING 060-350



ALTERNATIVES
QUEER MOUNTAIN 060-354



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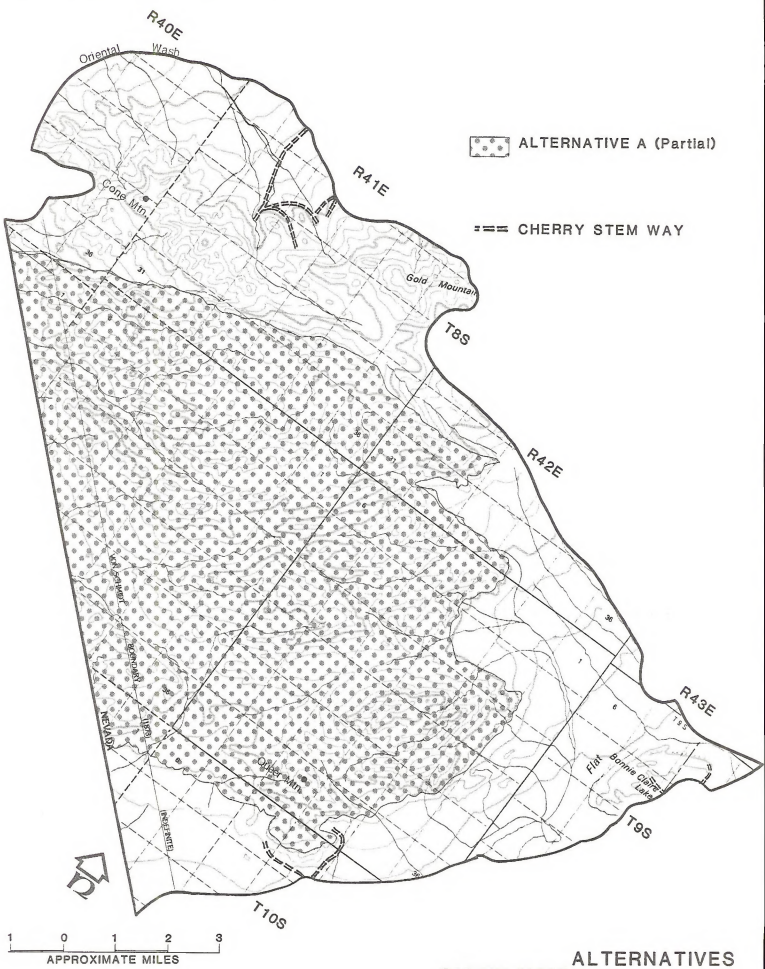
QUEER MOUNTAIN 060-354



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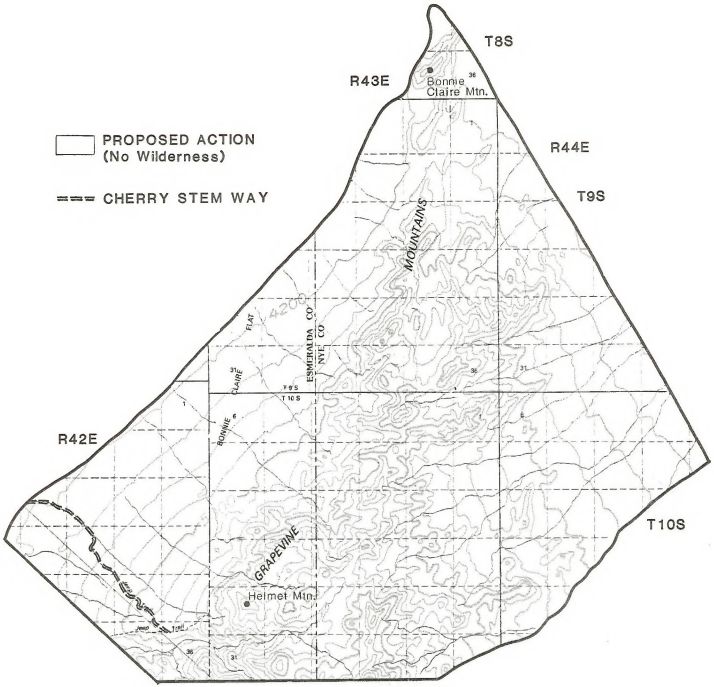
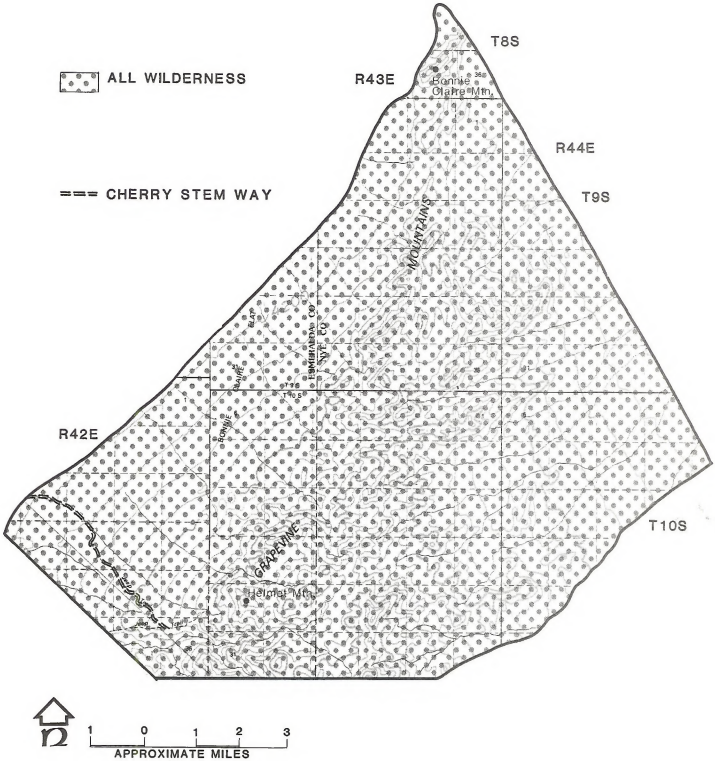
QUEER MOUNTAIN 060-354



1 0 1 2 3
APPROXIMATE MILES

ALTERNATIVES
GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN 060-355



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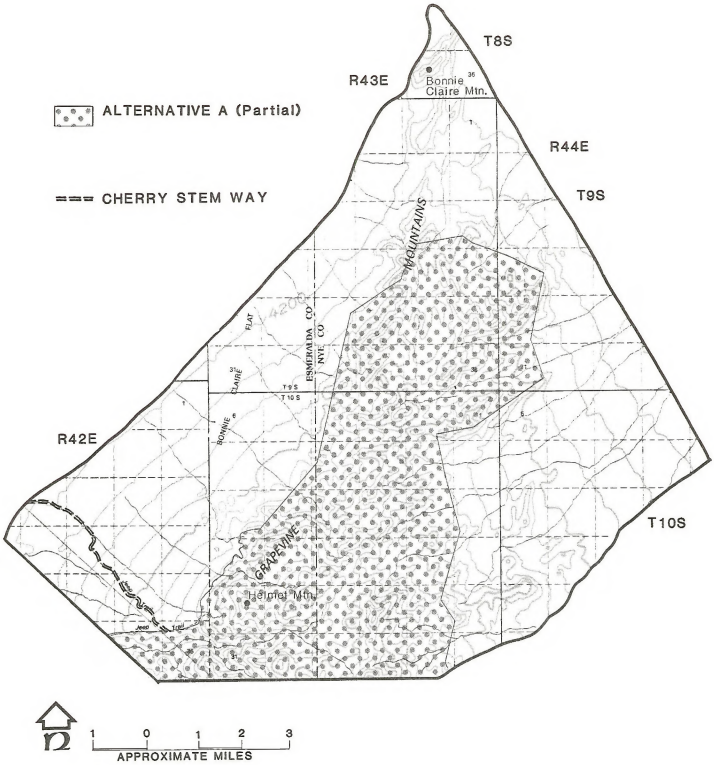
GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN 060-355



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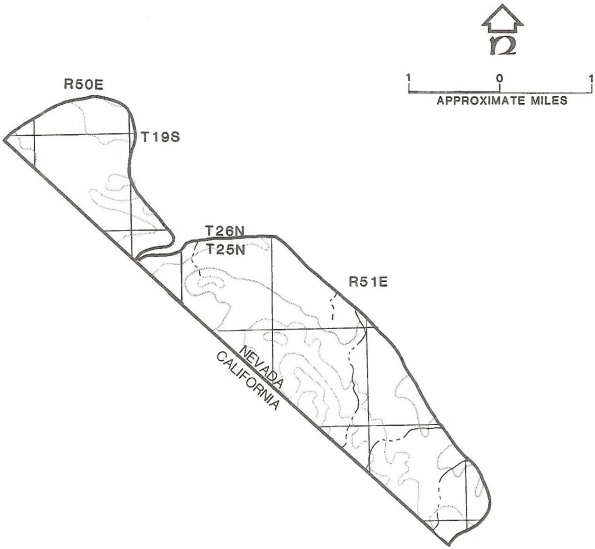
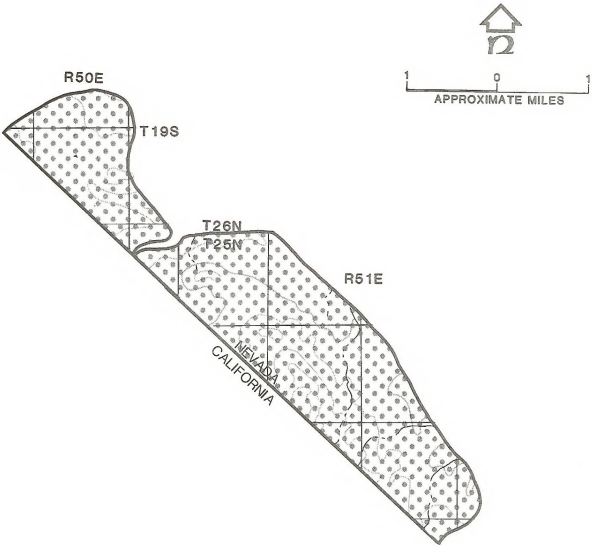
GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN 060-355



PROPOSED ACTION (No Wilderness)

ALTERNATIVES
RESTING SPRING RANGE 050-460



ALL WILDERNESS

ALTERNATIVES
RESTING SPRING RANGE 050-460

CHAPTER 3
Affected Environment

CHAPTER 3

SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA (NV-060-338)

Wilderness Values

The Silver Peak Range WSA is located 10 miles west of the town of Silver Peak and 40 miles southwest of Tonopah in Esmeralda County. The 33,900 acre WSA is roughly rectangular, eight miles east to west and six miles north to south, with a three mile wide projection on the north end.

The WSA contains the northwest corner of the Silver Peak Range. The central feature is a flat-topped, tree-less, three-mile long summit ridge with Piper Peak, 9,450 feet, its highest point. The rest of the WSA consists of the rugged canyons and ridges that radiate from the summit ridge. Two long drainages, Icehouse and Piper, cut canyons through colorful formations of white, pink and green tuffs and other volcanic rocks. Upper elevations are heavily forested with pinyon pine and juniper except for the distinctive sagebrush "meadows" on the summit ridge and other flat-topped ridges in the WSA. Below 7,000 feet to the WSA's lowest point at 5,500 feet are desert shrub communities of shadscale and rabbit brush.

Naturalness

The Silver Peak Range WSA is remarkably pristine. Outside sights include views of human activity but no to the extent that the overall feeling of naturalness is impaired. Only three human improvements are found within the WSA itself. A U.S. Forest Service solar powered repeater is located near the summit of Piper Peak. An area of mining assessment work consisting of two bladed cuts and about a half mile of bladed access road is located near the west boundary. Only Blind Spring is developed. Improvements consist of an abandoned wooden trough, broken pieces of pipe and a small, six-foot diameter, rock lined pond. None of these improvements detract from the naturalness of the area as a whole.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

This WSA offers outstanding opportunities for solitude because of a combination of topographic and vegetative screening. The size of the area, 33,900 acres, and the configuration are adequate to offer opportunities for solitude. The exception is the narrow, three-mile wide, northern extension. However, this extension is divided by a 2,000 foot ridge drained by narrow canyons. Visitors would be screened from each other and the outside in spite of being within 1-½ miles from the boundary. The rugged canyons and "badlands" topography on the north and west side of the WSA have sufficient topographic screening to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude in spite of the low growing vegetation. Although the southeast and northeast slopes are less rugged, they are forested with pinyon pine and juniper which offers excellent screening. The flat, bold summit ridge does not offer any screening, so increased visitor use of the ridge will diminish the opportunities for solitude. However, the variety of other attractions including Piper Canyon, Icehouse Canyon and the northern ridge will help disperse visitors. The numerous useable springs will disperse campers.

The Silver Peak Range WSA offers an outstanding opportunity for primitive recreation. A diversity of high quality opportunities are available and dayhiking and backpacking are outstanding. The varied topography, attractive rock formations, diverse plant communities including lush riparian areas, water, high interest animals--bighorn sheep, mule deer, chukar and wild horses, outstanding views and variety of destinations are its best features.

Special Features

The Silver Peak Range WSA has outstanding special features. A large herd (118 animals) of desert bighorn sheep inhabits the Silver Peak Range. About 50 percent of their crucial summer habitat is within the WSA. The largest herd of wild horses in the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP area (300 animals) inhabits the Silver Peak Herd Area. The WSA makes up about 15 percent of the herd area. The WSA has excellent examples of volcanic activity. The most significant feature is the Silver Peak caldera, a four mile by eight mile long collapsed magma chamber that has since been filled by later lava flows. The caldera underlies the northeast portion of the WSA. Obsidian pebbles and petrified wood are common in Icehouse Canyon wash.

Only two archaeological sites have been located, but the numerous sources of food and water, a source of obsidian and proximity to Fish Lake indicate a high favorability for prehistoric resources.

Energy and Mineral

Precambrian Paleozoic basement rocks are exposed along the northern and southern margins of the WSA and smaller exposures of the rocks are also found near the western edge of the WSA. Intruding the older sediments are Mesozoic plutons and smaller bodies of pegmatites as well as aplite and latite dikes. Mineralization associated with these intrusives has been identified to the northeast in the Mineral Ridge district and to the west in the Dyer district.

The central highland of the Silver Peak Range lies between the areas of basement rock and consists of late Pliocene tuffs and flows that originated from the Silver Peak Caldera. The caldera has its center about three to four miles northeast of Piper Peak and is about four by eight miles across. Early caldera eruptions produced rhyolitic to andesitic lava flows interbedded with airfall tuffs and waterlaid sediments. Later subsidence produced northeast striking, high-angle faults that became mineralized during the later stages of the caldera cycle, (Keith, 1977). Fluids released after volcanism ceased, deposited the silver bearing quartz veins of the Red Mountain district, and there are indications that similar mineralization is very close to the WSA or even within it.

Previous mineral production has come mainly from the Mineral Ridge and Red Mountain districts, immediately northeast of the WSA. The Mineral Ridge district produced about $13 million in gold during the 1860's, 1870's and 1930's which would be worth about $200 million at modern prices.

The Red Mountain district produced about $3 million in the late 1930's which would be worth about $30 million at modern prices. There are records of three major productive mines in the area: the 16-to-1, the Mohawk and the Nivloc. Several other small mines and prospects exist in the area as well. The 16-to-1 mine, currently operating, has reserves of 1.1 million tons grading at 0.035 ounces gold/ton and 8 ounces silver/ton according to published reports. Reportedly, the Mohawk mine has 7 targets possibly containing 150,000 tons of ore. The Nivloc mine produced nearly $4 million in silver between 1937 and 1943. The Dyer district, on the western edge of the WSA, has produced $13,000 mainly in silver, (Nevada Department of Minerals, testimony submitted during public comment period).

The geochemistry of the Dyer district shows a distinct base-metal, precious-metal mineralization associated with quartz veins along NW structures. Elements of the same mineralization, especially lead and mercury, are associated with similar rocks and structures and can be extended along the entire western side of the WSA.

A second, very distinct mineral association between tungsten and skarn deposits can be made for the same area. The proximity of the older sediments to granitic rock is apparent; the location of tungsten mineralization is not apparent. The tungsten anomalies extend for over five miles down the western side of the range and involve five major drainages. The unknown source or sources of tungsten are from the east, in the direction of the WSA.

Six different drainage systems along the same (western) side of the range are anomalous in mercury, one drainage hosts a known mercury deposit. Some anomalous drainages originate far to the east, well within the WSA and near the western boundary of the Silver Peak caldera. The presence of anomalous mercury in these drainages could very well indicate the presence of undiscovered precious metal deposits somewhere in the area served by the drainage system.

The correlation between the geochemistry and mineralization of the precious-metal deposits of the Red Mountain district and their relationship to the Silver Peak caldera has been made. Sunshine Mining Company, which operates the 16-to-1 Mine just east of the WSA, has submitted geochemical, mapping and modeling data which support the caldera model. Sunshine also submitted data concerning other geologic indicators to show that the same strong NE-SW trending structures holding economic mineralization in the Red Mountain district may extend into the Silver Peak Range WSA (Sunshine Mining Company, letter of February 15, 1985 comment letter No. 52). These structures are parallel to mineralized NE-trending structures outside of the WSA, and they have geochemical anomalies associated with them that are similar to the mineralization in the Red Mountain deposits.

The only localized area within the WSA without apparent mineralization exposed at surface or revealed by samples from drainages which cut it is in the southeastern quarter especially along the eastern end of McAfee Canyon. This area is covered by a thick layer of air-fall and ash flow tuffs that have no apparent mineralization.

Comments received during the draft RMP/EIS comment period from Inspiration Mines Inc., operator of the Sanger Mine located within the Red Mountain District, indicate mineralized veins aligned NE-SW along local faults which trend for roughly eight miles crossing the southeast side of the WSA. Because of this, there may be good chances of finding additional ore deposits within the WSA. However, the Nevada Bureau of Mines Geochemical Report indicated a lack of mineralization in this portion of the WSA and therefore gave it a low favorability for metallic minerals.

Patented claims in the vicinity are all in the Mineral Ridge and Red Mountain districts, well to the east of the WSA. There are a great many unpatented claims outside the WSA most of which are in the two mining districts. Two large blocks of claims are located adjacent to the WSA in altered rocks which may be an extension of the Red Mountain district. One block claimed by the Sunshine Mining Co. is located near the east boundary in the vicinity of Mud Spring. The other block is adjacent to the north boundary. Within the WSA itself, there are 186 acres of claims of which 62 acres are pre-FLPMA.

Four percent of the WSA is classified as highly favorable for metallic minerals and is located along the eastern boundary. Seventy-four percent of the WSA is classified as having a moderate favorability for metallic minerals. Bracketed by producing mines and prospects, the WSA stands out as an area with potential for continued exploration. Addition evaluations in and adjoining the WSA are being conducted by both private industry, and governmental agencies.

No non-metallic resources are known to occur in the WSA. However, since any mineral material may have a market as a non-metallic resource, the entire WSA is rated as having a low favorability for nonmetallics. There are no oil and gas leases or applications in the WSA. The WSA has no indicated favorability for oil and gas.

There are no geothermal applications or leases in the WSA but there are two large blocks of leases adjacent to the northwestern and eastern boundaries. Geothermal exploration is taking place in adjacent Fish Lake Valley where there are over 25,000 acres of leases. One major geothermal company is exploring and considering geothermal power development in Fish Lake Valley. The entire WSA is rated as moderately favorable for geothermal resources.

Livestock Grazing

The Silver Peak Range WSA covers approximately 17,500 acres or about 22 percent of the Icehouse allotment. The remaining 16,400 acres of the WSA represents about 5 percent of the Silver Peak allotment.

Blind Spring, developed for livestock water, is located within the WSA. However, it has been abandoned for several years.

Wildlife

Bighorn Sheep

Current bighorn habitat in the Silver Peak Mountain Range is 124.4 square miles. The area population estimate for 1982, is 118 animals. About 43 percent or 53 square miles of the bighorn habitat in the range and 50 percent of the crucial summer habitat is within the Silver Peak Range WSA. Opportunities to see sheep are good, especially in Icehouse Canyon and near Mud Spring.

The Silver Peak Range WSA is the only WSA in which bighorn sheep are currently found. The Silver Peak Habitat Area is the number one priority in the Esmeralda - So. Nye RMP area for development and implementation of a Habitat Management Plan. Bighorn sheep, deer and chukar are priority species. Four water catchments and two spring developments have been proposed in the habitat area. Since most of the WSA is well watered and already provides crucial summer habitat, most improvements will probably be located outside the WSA. However, one catchment is proposed for Piper Canyon on the west side of the WSA.

Mule Deer

An estimated 120 deer (1982, population estimate) inhabit 372.7 square miles of habitat in the Silver Peak/Palmetto Habitat Area. Approximately 33.2 square miles or 9 percent of this habitat area is within the Silver Peak Range WSA. Proposed wildlife improvements for the range are discussed under bighorn sheep. These improvements will also be beneficial to mule deer.

Other Wildlife

Mountain lion, furbearers, chukar, mountain quail, mourning dove, sage grouse, and raptors may be found in the WSA.

The spotted bat is classified as "rare" by the State of Nevada's Commission General Regulation No. 1. BLM considers the species "sensitive." The spotted bat has been identified in the Silver Peak Range outside of the WSA. Key habitat is caves in proximity to water sources. This type of habitat occurs within the WSA so spotted bats may be found there.

The Silver Peak Range WSA is the only WSA in the RMP area with riparian habitat. Approximately 7 acres of this habitat is associated with 10 springs in the WSA.

Water Sources

One intermittent and seven perennial water sources exist within the Silver Peak Range WSA. One perennial spring, Blind Spring, was developed but is now abandoned.

PIGEON SPRING (NV-060-350)

Wilderness Values

The Pigeon Spring WSA lies along the California border, ten miles west of Lida, Nevada in Esmeralda County. The 3,575 acre WSA is contiguous to California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) WSA, No. 111, Sylvania Mountains, 14,943 acres. The 1980 Wilderness Inventory determined that the Nevada portion of the Pigeon Springs WSA did not meet the wilderness criteria for size, solitude, and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California WSA. Should the California WSA be eliminated from wilderness consideration, this WSA would also be eliminated. The CDCA Plan has recommended that their WSA be designated unsuitable for wilderness.

Pigeon Spring WSA contains the upper drainages of Cucomunga Canyon in the Sylvania Mountains. The central feature is 1½ miles of a steep-walled canyon that continues on to the California side. The rest consists of broader drainages and rolling ridges. Elevations vary from 6,400 to 8,160 feet. It is forested with pinyon pine and juniper throughout. No springs or streams occur in the WSA.

Naturalness

Naturalness is substantially impaired within one mile of the south and east boundaries. Mining interest and the accessibility of the relatively level terrain on the periphery of the WSA has led to the development of several, short (less than ½ mile) ways. At least three ways branch off the 1 ¼ mile section of boundary that follows Cucomunga Canyon Road on the southeast. In addition, the cherrystem found in this section is not large enough to contain the entire area disturbed by mining activities. About 80 to 100 acres are affected by mining excavations, spoil piles and access routes. Two additional ways branch off the mining spur roads that form the eastern boundary. Also, one way branches off the north boundary and enters the WSA.

The WSA is surrounded by historic and active mining areas of which the active mining operations in Sylvania Canyon are the most extensive and significant. These activities are visible from high points in the WSA, but the rest of the unit is screened by topography.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The Nevada portion of this area is too small (3,575 acres) to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. Topographic screening is outstanding in the rugged main canyon and along the main ridge which parallels the Von Schmidt line (original California-Nevada boundary). Dense pinyon and juniper stands also provide screening along this ridge. The broader drainages and less steep terrain of the remainder of the WSA do not offer outstanding screening. Although some of the north and east slopes in this portion do have dense pinyon and juniper cover, the majority is lightly forested. Also, ways and cherrystem roads lessen the opportunity to achieve solitude in this area.

The Nevada portion of the Pigeon Spring WSA does not offer outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. It is too small and offers only two attractions, the steep-walled canyon and the high point of the ridge which is the highest point in the Sylvania Mountains. This ridge offers good views of the White Mountains. The scenery within the WSA is not diverse in landform or vegetation. Visitors have a fair opportunity to view mule deer in any season. The area is not suited for backpacking because of its small size. A visitor is never more than 1.5 miles from a boundary. However, the steep-walled canyon is a suitable destination for backpackers coming from the California side. Hunting is available but nothing is known about quality or quantity. The California District of BLM (CDCA Plan) considers the Cucomunga Canyon Road, on the south boundary, an intensive use area for camping, ORVs, sightseeing, painting and photography.

Special Features

There are no known special features in this WSA.

Energy and Minerals

In most of the Pigeon Spring WSA, the bedrock is Jurassic quartz monzonite, which has intruded into a thick series of slightly metamorphosed Precambrian to Paleozoic sedimentary rocks. These metamorphics are only exposed as small areas of hornfels, Wyman Formation and marbleized Reed Dolomite. These two Precambrian formations are the oldest in the sedientary series. A narrow band of Tertiary olivine basalt runs across part of the WSA.

There are a few patented claims southwest of the WSA. There are hundreds of unpatented claims surrounding the WSA, mostly concentrated in the vicinity of the molybdenum area and also in the talc-bearing area. Inside the WSA are 260 acres of pre-FLPMA claims and 300 acres of post-FLPMA claims. Most of the claims in the WSA are placer claims.

The entire Pigeon Spring WSA is classified as highly favorable for metallic minerals, placer gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten, lead and zinc. The WSA has a low favorability for nonmetallic minerals. The quartz monzonite rock type is not a suitable host rock for the talc deposits found to the north. There are no oil and gas applications or leases. The WSA has no indication of favorability for oil and gas. There are also no geothermal applications and low favorability for geothermal resources.

Livestock Grazing

The entire WSA, 3,575 acres, is in the Magruder Mountain Allotment. This represents about .6 percent of the allotment. No projects are found within the WSA.

Wildlife

Bighorn Sheep

About 5.4 square miles of historic bighorn sheep range is within this WSA. This represents about four percent of the Magruder/Palmetto Bighorn Habitat Area. NDOW plans to reintroduce sheep into this area at some future time. This habitat area is ranked seventh out of twelve for Habitat Management Plan development and implementation in the Preferred Alternative of the Esmeralda - So. Nye RMP/EIS. Bureau funding in the future is not anticipated to be enough to implement this HMP. However, this would not preclude the reintroduction of a small number of bighorn as the habitat area includes permanent water sources. Although this water is not within the WSA, it is adjacent to it and would provide the animals with additional habitat within the study area.

Mule Deer

An estimated population of 120 deer inhabit 39 square miles of habitat in the Magruder/Sylvania Habitat Area. Approximately .8 square miles or 2 percent of this habitat area is within the Pigeon Spring WSA.

No wildlife improvements are planned for this area.

Other Wildlife

Mountain lions, chukar, furbearers and raptors may be found in the WSA.

Water Sources

No water sources were identified within the Piegon Spring WSA.

QUEER MOUNTAIN (NV-060-354)

Wilderness Values

The Queer Mountain WSA is located 20 miles northwest of Beatty along the California/Nevada border in Esmeralda County. The 81,550 acre Queer Mountain WSA is contiguous to the CDCA's WSA, Little Sand Springs, and Death Valley National Monument WSA No. 1. The CDCA Plan has recommended that Little Sand Springs be designated wilderness and the National Park Service has administratively endorsed their area for wilderness. Queer Mountain WSA meets the wilderness criteria on its own merits; its designation is not dependent on the status of the California units.

The roughly rectangular Queer Mountain WSA contains an upland of east or northeast trending ridges and valleys. Broad bajadas slope towards Oriental Wash on the north and Bonnie Claire Flat and Grapevine Canyon on the east and south. Elevations range from 4,000 feet near Grapevine Canyon in the southern tip to the 7,952 foot elevation of Gold Mountain on the north. This 4,000 feet elevation gain occurs gradually over the 14 mile length of the WSA, so much of the unit's terrain appears rolling rather than precipitous. The

majority of the WSA is volcanic in origin. The exception is the north end which contains sedimentary rocks intruded by quartz monzonite. The WSA is located in a transitional vegetation zone. Most of the WSA is vegetated with shrubs and cactus of the saltbush/greasewood plant community, but patches of creosote bush and Joshua trees more typical of the Las Vegas area also occur. Gold Mountain and its surrounding ridges are thinly forested with pinyon pine and juniper. No springs or streams occur in the WSA.

Naturalness

The two areas of the WSA where naturalness is impacted are the southern bajada that slopes down to Highway 72 and the north slope and bajada of Gold Mountain. Four ways totaling three miles in length enter the WSA along the south boundary. The impact on naturalness of these four ways is localized. More significant are the outside sights and sounds of the bordering highway and powerline which can easily be seen on the gently sloping, sparsely vegetated bajada.

Extensive mining activity has occurred on the north slope of Gold Mountain mainly outside the WSA boundary. Five ways totaling about five miles in length enter the WSA and connect outside roads to a cluster of minor diggings on the north and south sides. These intrusions substantially impair naturalness in the immediate area. Topography adequately screens the rest of the WSA from these signs of human activity. The roads, ways and mineral activity outside the WSA due north of Gold Mountain have little effect on the WSA. The rugged canyons and rapid elevation gain in this portion of the WSA screen the visitor and provide a feeling of distance.

No other outside sights have any substantial effect on the feeling of naturalness in the WSA. Queer Mountain WSA is large, adjacent to other WSAs and located in an area with little development other than historic mining activity.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and Primitive
and Unconfined Recreation

The size of the area, 81,550 acres, and blocky configuration are adequate to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are no cherrystems.

Topographic screening is outstanding in most of the mountainous portion of the WSA because of the numerous ridges, canyons, hills, peaks and other features. A visitor could find a secluded spot almost anywhere in this part which is about two thirds of the WSA.

Some of the large valleys, particularly on the south end, are too broad, straight and uniform in slope to offer outstanding screening. The bajadas on the north and south sides provide minimal topographic and vegetative screening and are affected by the intruding ways and Highway 72 near the south boundary. Secluded spots would be difficult to find in those portions.

Vegetation does not provide substantial screening in any part of the WSA. The pinyon and juniper trees in the Gold Mountain area are too widely scattered to effectively screen visitors from each other. The rest of the WSA is vegetated with low desert shrubs.

Primitive recreation opportunities are not outstanding in the Queer Mountain WSA. The WSA lacks diversity in vegetation, geology and landforms, and does not have truly outstanding features. Its principal attraction is solitude. Excellent access and proximity to other wild areas are advantages. The lack of water affects the quality of backpacking, camping and horse use as well as the abundance and diversity of wildlife.

Special Features

A small herd of wild horses (19 animals) lives in the Gold Mountain Herd Area. About 30 percent (30,000 acres) of the herd area is located in the WSA.

Energy and Minerals

Most of the WSA is composed of Tertiary volcanic rocks; rhyolites, dacites, andesites and Timber Mountain tuff. The non-mountainous portions of the WSA are covered by Quaternary alluvium. Precambrian and Paleozoic sedimentary rocks intruded by Jurassic quartz are exposed on the north end of the WSA. All known mineralization is located in these older rocks. Paleozoic and Precambrian sedimentary and Jurassic intrusive rocks are believed to underlie the Tertiary volcanics throughout the WSA. Small areas of the older rocks may be near the surface or exposed by faulting in other parts of the WSA. The Tertiary rocks are broken by a few east-west faults with substantial displacement and by more numerous northeast trending faults.

All of the patented claims in the vicinity are in the Gold Mountain district, outside but close to the WSA. Numerous unpatented claims are also located in this area. Within the WSA are 402 acres of pre-FLPMA claims and 305 acres of post-FLMPA claims. All of these are located on the north end of the WSA near either the Gold Mountain District or the Silver Mountain prospects.

Two areas constituting about 43 percent of the WSA are classified as moderately favorable for metallic minerals, gold, silver and base metals. One area, located in the northern third of the WSA, includes Gold Mountain district and Silver Mountain prospects. This area contains outcrops of the mineral bearing Precambian and Paleozoic sedimentaries and Jurassic intrusives.

The second area is located in the eastern corner of the WSA. The remainder of the WSA, is classified as having low favorability for metallic minerals. Although this portion is capped by Tertiary volcanics, there is some potential for outcrops of the mineral bearing older rocks.

The WSA has moderate favorability for sand and gravel deposits on the bajadas. No other nonmetallic resources are known to occur in the WSA. However, since any mineral material may have a market as a nonmetallic resource, the remainder of the WSA is rated as having low favorability for nonmetallics.

The entire WSA has a low favorability for uranium. There is some potential for fracture-filled, caldera-related or intrusive contact uranium deposits in the mountainous portion and for deposited uranium in reduced zones in the permeable alluvium. Several radioactive occurrences have been identified near the north boundary. These are probably too small or low graded to be of significance.

There are no oil and gas leases or applications and no favorability for oil and gas due to the absence of source rocks. The WSA has a moderate favorability for geothermal resources. It is in a portion of the Basin and Range region where deep-seated normal faults are known to be conduits for Late Cenozoic volcanics and thermal waters. The WSA is cut by numerous faults. No documented exploration has been done in the WSA and there are no leases or applications.

Livestock Grazing

The entire WSA, 81,550 acres, is in the Magruder Mountain Allotment. This represents approximately 13 percent of the allotment. There are no projects within the WSA.

Wildlife

Bighorn

About 72.2 square miles of the Queer Mountain WSA has been identified by NDOW as suitable habitat for introduction of bighorn. In the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP/EIS, the Gold Mountain Habitat Area, as it is called, is ranked tenth for HMP development and implementation. It is not likely in the future that Bureau funding would be available for any water development prescribed in this HMP. However, a permanent water source, Willow Springs, is adjacent to the Queer Mountain WSA and would provide additional habitat for transplanted animals which would include the north central part of the WSA.

Mule Deer

An estimated 24 deer inhabit the 11.8 square miles of this habitat area. Approximately 4.2 square miles or 36 percent is included in the WSA. No improvements are proposed in this habitat area.

Other Wildlife

Mountain lion, furbearers, chukar and raptors are likely to be found in the WSA.

Water Sources

No water sources were identified within the Queer Mountain WSA.

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS (NV-060-355)

Wilderness Values

Grapevine Mountains WSA was known as Bonnie Claire Flats WSA during the inventory process. The name was changed to reflect the dominant topographic feature.

The WSA is located 20 miles northwest of Beatty along the California/Nevada border in Esmeralda and Nye Counties. Access is via State Highway 72 (Scotty's Junction Road) which parallels the northwestern boundary.

The 66,800 acre Grapevine Mountains WSA is contiguous to Death Valley National Monument WSA No. 4. The National Park Service area has been administratively endorsed as suitable for wilderness designation. Grapevine Mountains WSA meets the wilderness criteria on its own merits so its designation is not dependent on the status of the National Park Service unit.

The WSA contains a highly dissected ridgeline which is the northern end of the northwest-trending Grapevine Mountains. That part of the range within the National Monument is extremely rugged and impressive with numerous steep walled canyons and a rapid elevation gain of 7,000 feet.

Several peaks over 8,000 feet are just outside of the BLM boundary. Since the BLM portion contains the end of the range and its foothills, it is somewhat less rugged and elevation changes are not as extreme. Numerous peaks exceed 7,000 feet with the highest at 7,694. The WSA also includes two broad bajadas which drain the range towards Sarcobatus Flat on the northeast and Bonnie Claire Flat on the northwest. The lowest point on the bajadas is 4,000 feet. The majority of the WSA is volcanic and composed of rhyolites, dacites, andesites and tuffs. The south end is quite colorful with bands of white and various reddish hues.

This WSA is located in a tranisitional vegetation zone. Most of the WSA is vegetated with shrubs and cactus of the saltbush/greasewood community but patches of creosote bush and Joshua trees also occur. The higher elevations on the south end of the WSA are forested with pinyon pines and junipers. No springs or streams occur in the WSA.

Naturalness

Human activities inside and outside the Grapevine Mountains WSA are substantially unnoticeable with a few exceptions. Naturalness is impaired within a mile of both the northeast and northwest boundaries due to the effects of sand and gravel pits just inside the northwest boundary and the outside sights and sounds of Highway 72, which constitutes the northwest boundary, the northeast boundary road, and powerlines paralleling both roads. Several sections on the western edge of the northwestern bajada are also affected by three miles of "two track," or way, and three short sections of cat work. Outside sights and sounds render the affected area as unnatural. The mountainous portion of the WSA is natural. This portion is also unaffected by outside sights and sounds since the WSA is large, adjacent to other WSAs and in an area with little development other than historic mining activity.

Outstanding Opportunity for Solitude and
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The size of the area, 66,800 acres, and rectangular configuration are adequate to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. There are no cherrystems. Topographic screening is outstanding in the mountainous portion which makes up about half of the WSA. The ridgeline of the range is highly dissected creating numerous peaks, narrow canyons and other very rugged features. There are about 5,000 acres on the south end of the range that are forested with

pinyon pine and junipers in varying densities. The heavily forested east and north slopes offer outstanding vegetative screening. Several long broad washes, which drain the east slope, do not provide substantial screening. With this exception, a visitor could find a secluded spot anywhere in the mountainous portion of the WSA.

The other half of the WSA consists of the sweeping bajadas on either side of the range. Topographic and vegetative screening is minimal in this portion. Also, opportunities for solitude on the bajadas are affected by activities on the boundary roads particularly Highway 72. A visitor would have a difficult time finding seclusion on the bajadas.

Considered alone, primitive recreation opportunities are not outstanding in the Grapevine Mountains WSA. The bajada offers minimal recreational opportunities, and the range is narrow, lacks water, and has less than outstanding features. It is easily accessible, with rugged and in some areas, very colorful scenery. Opportunities to view wild horses and mule deer are available but limited. The Grapevine Mountains WSA is, from a recreational as well as a geologic standpoint, a northerly extension of the Grapevine Mountains which lie to the south in Death Valley National Monument. The most dramatic scenery and best opportunities are to the south. This WSA is a good recreational complement to the area to the south but does not compare in quality.

Special Features

A small herd of wild horses (19) lives in the Gold Mountain Herd Area and are the only special feature of the WSA.

Energy and Mineral

Most of the WSA is composed of Tertiary volcanic rocks; rhyolites, dacites, andesites and Timber Mountain tuff. The non-mountainous portions of the WSA are covered by Quarternary alluvium. The Tertiary rocks are broken by a few east-west faults with substantial displacement and by more numerous northeast trending faults.

Precambrian and Paleozoic sedimentary rocks, intruded by Jurassic quartz monzonite, are believed to underlie the Tertiary volcanics. These older potentially more mineralized rocks may be exposed by faulting in small areas of the WSA. In the southwestern part of the WSA is a small area of granitic rocks which may be part of the Sylvania pluton which is mineralized further north in the Gold Mountain district.

The only patented claims in the vicinity are in the Gold Mountain District. There are a great many unpatented claims in that area also. Within the WSA are 41 acres of pre-FLPMA claims and 1,154 acres of post-FLPMA claims. Nothing is known about the pre-FLPMA claims; the post-FLPMA claims are all located in one block in the granitic rocks. The southern position of the mountainous terrain, comprising about 30 percent of the WSA, is classified as moderately favorable for metallic minerals, because that is where the Paleozoic sedimentary rocks and Jurassic intrusives are most likely to occur. Metals which occur in similar rock types to the north are gold, silver, and base metals. The remainder of the WSA is classified as having low favorability for metallics.

The WSA has moderate favorability for sand and gravel deposits on the bajadas. These deposits have been utilized at four sites by the Nevada Department of Transportation for a number of years. However, numerous reserves are available outside the WSA. No other nonmetallic minerals are known to occur in the WSA. However, since any mineral material may have a market as a nonmetallic resource, the remainder of the WSA is rated as having low favorability for nonmetallics.

The entire WSA has a low favorability for uranium. There is some possibility for fracture-filled, caldera related or intrusive contact uranium deposits in the mountainous portion and for deposited uranium in reduced zones in the permeable alluvium. There are no known occurrences or uranium claims in the WSA. There are no oil and gas leases or applications and no favorability for oil and gas due to the absence of source rocks. The WSA has a moderate favorability for geothermal resources. It is in a portion of the Basin and Range where deep-seated normal faults are known to be conduits for late Cenozoic volcanics and thermal waters. The WSA is cut by numerous faults. No documented exploration has been done in the WSA and there are no leases or applications.

Livestock Grazing

The Grapevine Mountains WSA covers approximately 39,000 acres of the Magruder Mountain allotment. This is about six percent of the total allotment. The remaining 27,200 acres of the WSA are in the Montezuma allotment. This equals approximately five percent of the allotment.

About two miles of an allotment boundary fence is located in the northern portion of the WSA. The fence forms a portion of the boundary between these allotments.

Wildlife

Bighorn

About 31.1 sq. mi. of historic bighorn sheep range is within this WSA. This represents about 66 percent of the Amargosa Bighorn Habitat Area. NDOW plans to reintroduce sheep into this area at some future time. This habitat area is ranked sixth out of twelve for Habitat Management Plan development and implementation in the Preferred Alternative of the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP/EIS. Bureau funding in the future is not anticipated to be enough to implement this HMP. However, this would not preclude the reintroduction of a small number of bighorn as the habitat area includes permanent water sources. Although, this water is not within the WSA, it is adjacent to it and would provide the animals with additional habitat within the study area.

Mule Deer

An estimated population of 36 deer inhabit 16.6 square miles of habitat in the Amargosa Habitat Area. Approximately 13.5 square miles or 81 percent of this habitat area is within the Grapevine Mountains WSA. No HMP is planned for this area.

Other Wildlife

Furbearers, raptors and Gambel's quail can be found in the study area.

Water Sources

No Water sources were identified within the Grapevine Mountains WSA.

RESTING SPRING RANGE (NV-050-460)

Wilderness Values

The Resting Spring Range WSA is located 10 miles west of Pahrump along the California/Nevada border in Nye County. The 3,850 acre WSA is divided into two parts by a maintained dirt road which branches off the Ash Meadows Road. The northern portion is 1,050 acres and the southern portion is 2,800 acres.

The WSA is contiguous to the CDCA's WSA, Resting Spring Range. The 1980 Wilderness Inventory determined that the Nevada portion of this WSA did not meet the wilderness criteria for size, solitude and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California WSA. Should the California WSA be eliminated from wilderness consideration, the Nevada WSA would also be eliminated. The CDCA Plan has recommended that the California WSA be designated unsuitable for wilderness.

The Resting Spring Range WSA contains the foothills and lower drainages of the narrow, north-south trending Resting Spring Range located to the south in the California WSA.

Elevations range from 2,400 feet on the north end to 3,900 feet near the California line. Most of the WSA is composed of sedimentary rocks, primarily limestone. Volcanic ash beds occur in small areas near the boundaries. The WSA is vegetated with creosote bush, blackbrush, shadscale and other low desert shrubs and cacti. No springs or streams occur in the WSA.

Naturalness

No unnatural intrusions have been found in the WSA other than several bladed spots immediately adjacent to the road which divides the unit. This road, which is technically outside the WSA, is the most significant sign of human activity. It affects naturalness in the immediate vicinity of the three-fourths mile segment which divides the WSA.

The ranches, roads, mines and other developments of Ash Meadows, two miles to the north, and Stewart Valley, two miles to the southeast, are visible from the high points of the WSA. However, they do not have a significant impact on naturalness within the WSA.

Outstanding Opportunities for Solitude and
Primitive and Unconfined Recreation

The Nevada portion of this WSA is too small (3,850 acres) to offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. Its long narrow shape, divided in two by the intrusion road, is the worst possible configuration for providing opportunity for solitude. The WSA is never more than 1-¼ miles wide. The road, which bisects the WSA, lessens the opportunities for solitude in its immediate vicinity. This particularly affects the northern portion which is only 1,050 acres.

Some topographic screening, but no vegetative screening, is available in the foothills and broad washes which make up the WSA. Only a limited number of visitors could find seclusion in the area.

The Nevada portion of the Resting Spring Range WSA does not offer outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. The entire WSA is accessible to dayhikers and horseback riders, but it lacks special attractions. The landforms and plant life are not diverse or particularly scenic, and the hills are not high enough to be chanllenging. The area is not suited for backpacking because of its small size and narrow configuration. Visitors have some opportunity to see wild horses.

Special Features

There are no known special features in this WSA.

Energy and Minerals

The northern Resting Spring Range which contains the WSA is largely composed of Precambrian and Cambrian marine sediments which have been displaced by normal faults usually less than one mile in length. The Furnace Creek Fault zone, over 18 miles long, terminates southward at the southwestern flank of Shadow Mountain. Another major normal fault passes through Stewart Valley and bounds the Resting Spring Range on its eastern flank. Quaternary alluvial fan deposits cover much of the lower slopes. Miocene tuffaceous lake beds occur north of the WSA and in small areas in side the north boundary.

There are no mining claims in the WSA. Anaconda has a large block of claims for zeolites north and west of the WSA.

The entire WSA is classified as having a low favorability for metallic minerals with a low level of confidence. No deposits, prospects, or claims are known in the WSA or immediate vicinity. However, there are some outcrops of the Stirling quartzite and Wood Canyon Formation which are known to be favorable for gold mineralization elsewhere in the region.

The entire WSA also has a low favorability for nonmetallic minerals. Tertiary lake beds similar to those which produce zeolites further north are located along the north boundary. However, no zeolite beds are known within the WSA.

The WSA has no favorability for uranium, based on a lack of source rocks. It also has no favorability for oil and gas for the same reason. The WSA has a low favorability for geothermal resources. Thermal waters are located north of the WSA in Ash Meadows. No oil and gas or geothermal leases or applications are in the WSA.

Livestock Grazing

The WSA covers about 460 acres or 7 percent of the Grapevine - Rock Valley Allotment. There are no projects within the WSA.

Wildlife

Furbearers and raptors are found in the WSA.

Water Sources

No water resources were identified within the Resting Springs WSA.

SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA MAPS

EXISTING SITUATION
MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS

MINING

DEVELOPED SPRING

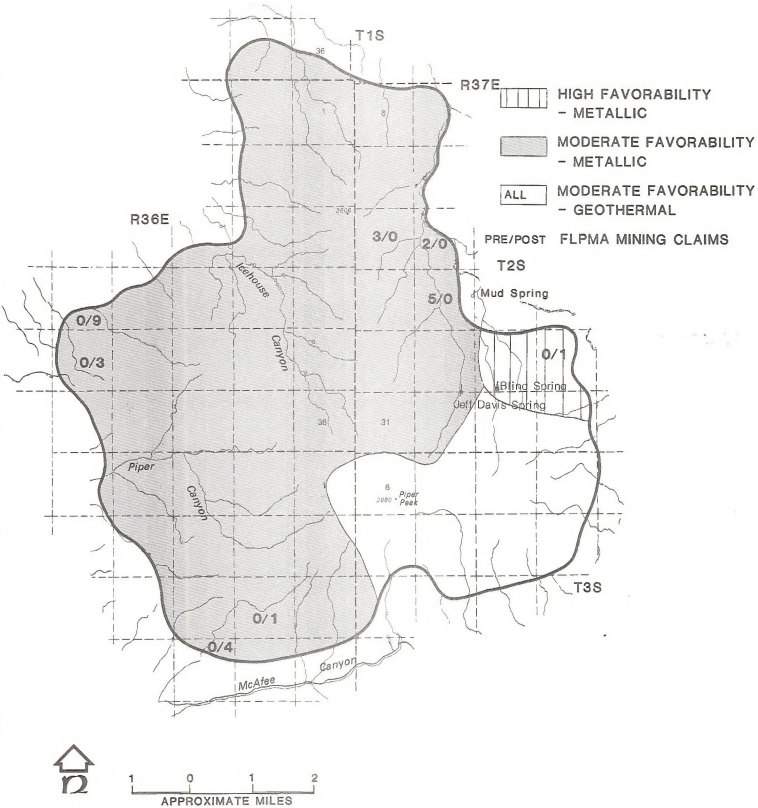
PORTABLE REPEATER STATION

1 0 1 2

APPROXIMATE MILES

EXISTING SITUATION

SILVER PEAK RANGE 060-338

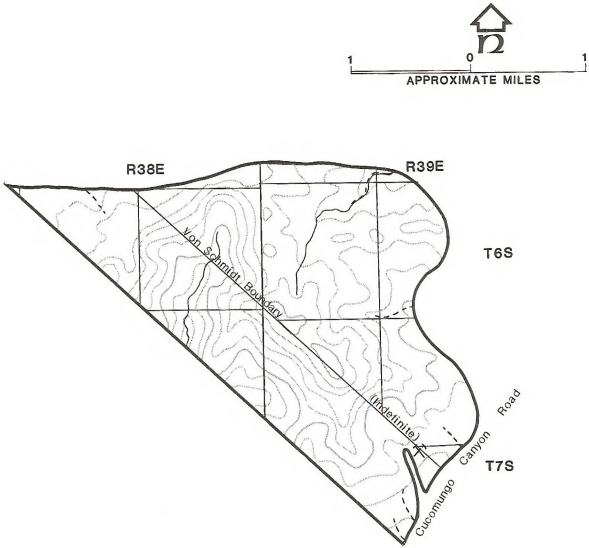


MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS

SILVER PEAK RANGE 060-338

PIDGEON SPRINGS WSA MAPS

EXISTING SITUATION
MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS



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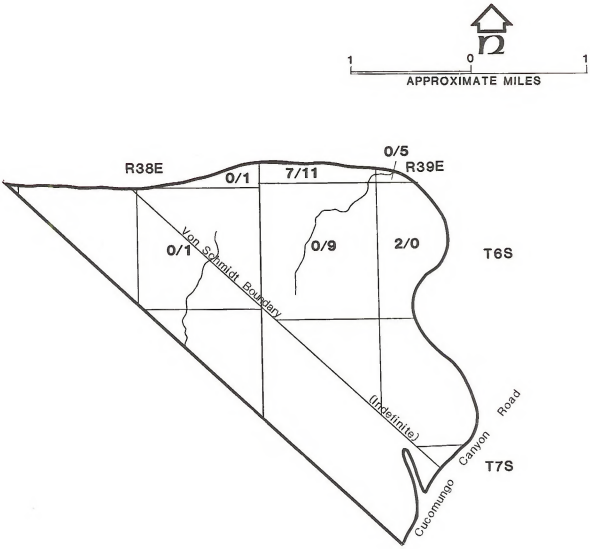
⚒ MINING

EXISTING SITUATION

PIGEON SPRING 060-350



ALL HIGH FAVORABILITY - METALLIC

PRE/POST FLPMA MINING CLAIMS

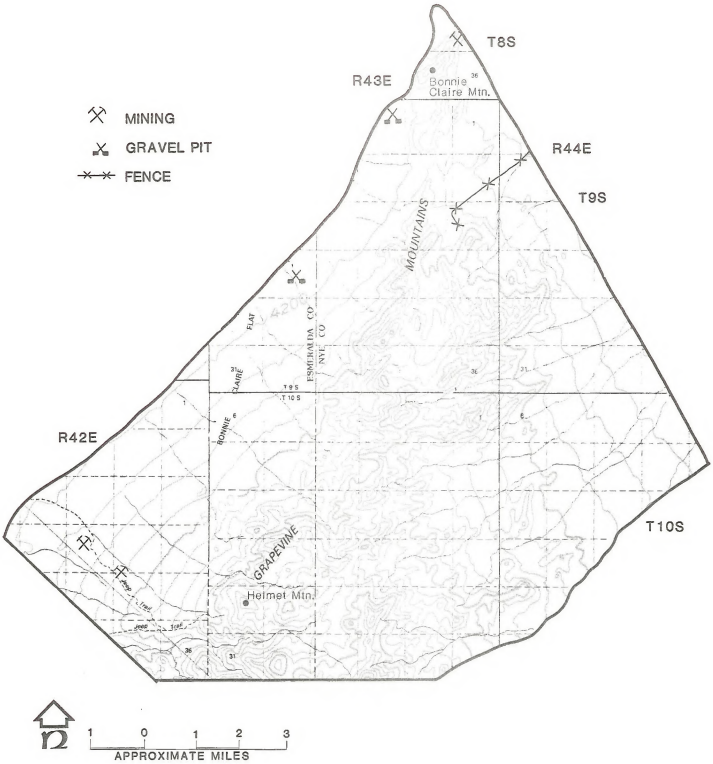
MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS

PIGEON SPRING 060-350

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN WSA MAPS

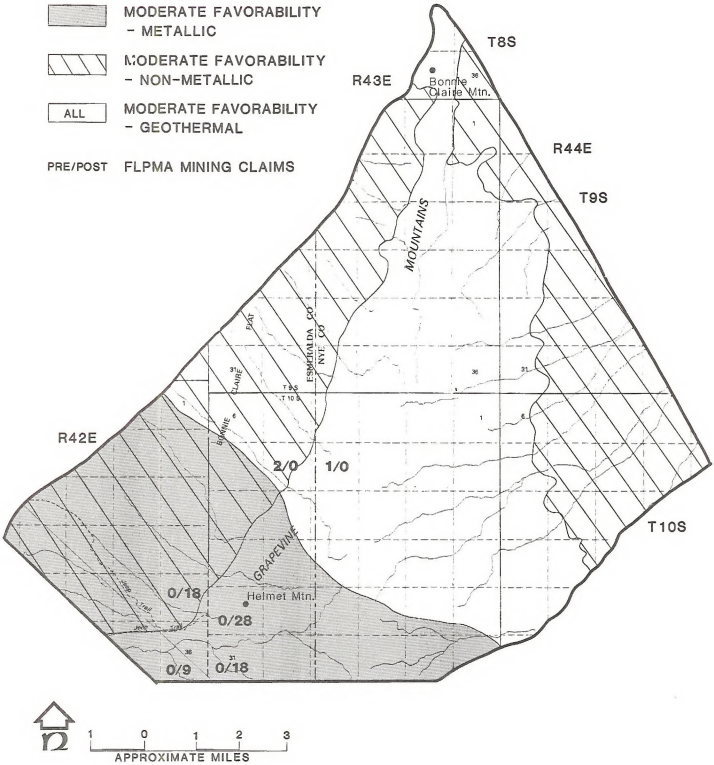
EXISTING SITUATION

MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS



EXISTING SITUATION

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN 060-355

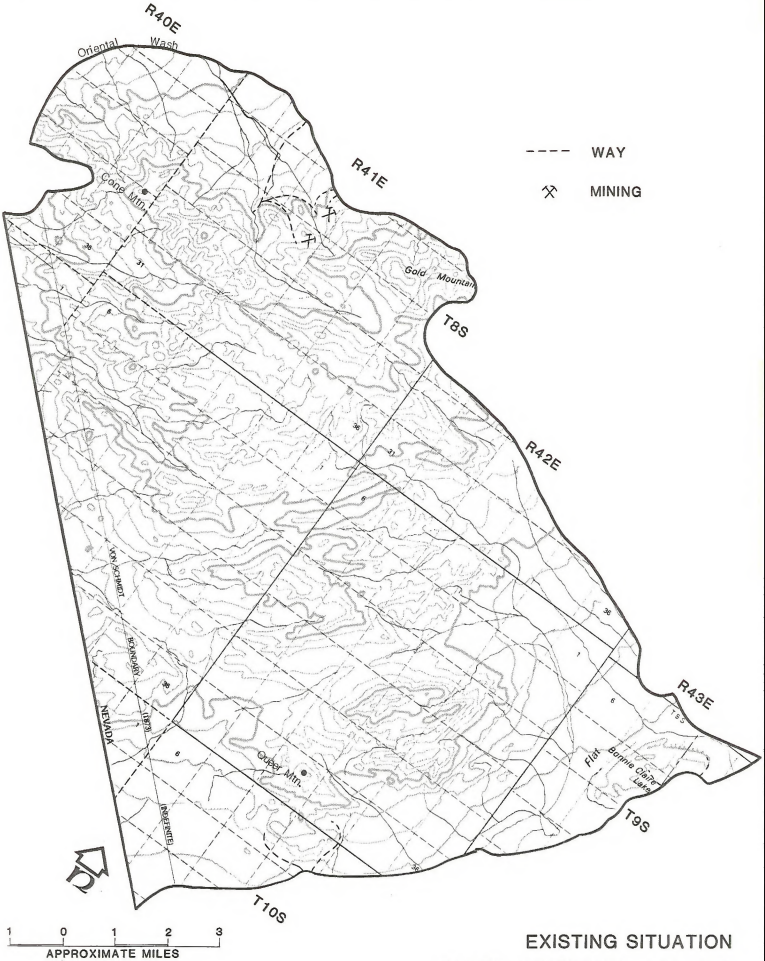


MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS
GRAPEVINE MOUNTAIN 060-355

QUEER MOUNTAIN WSA MAPS

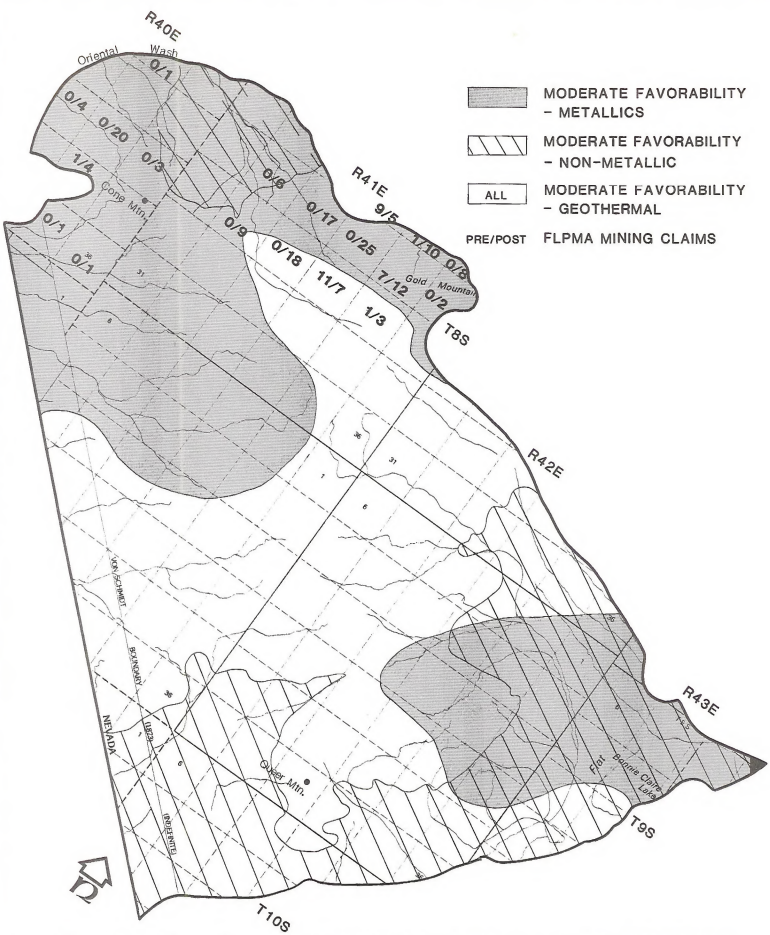
EXISTING SITUATION

MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS



EXISTING SITUATION

QUEER MOUNTAIN 060-354



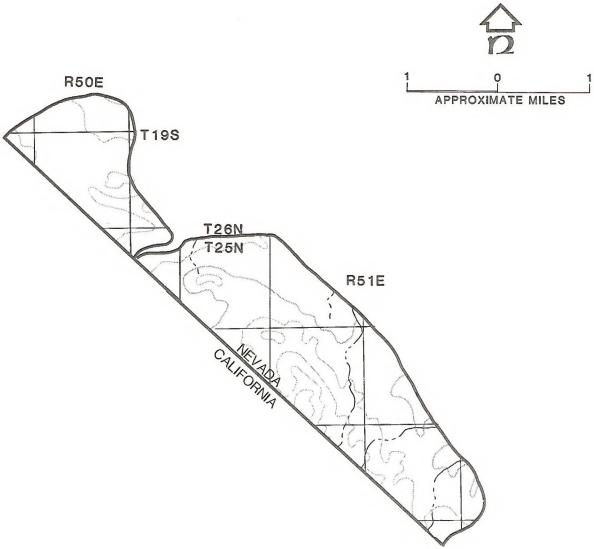
1 0 1 2 3
APPROXIMATE MILES

MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS
QUEER MOUNTAIN 060-354

RESTING SPRINGS WSA MAPS

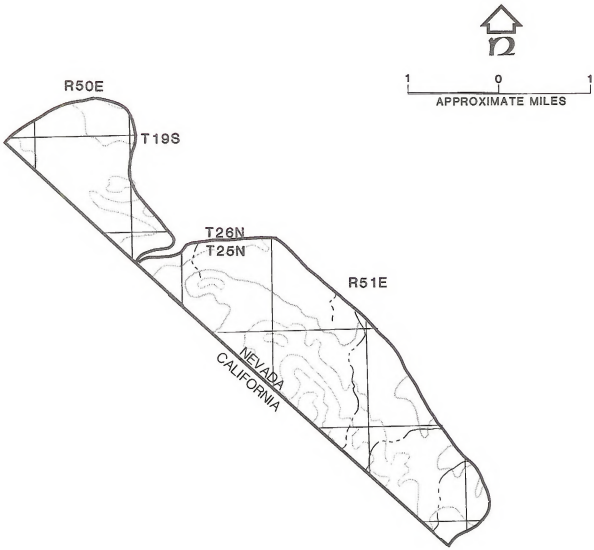
EXISTING SITUATION

MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS



EXISTING SITUATION

RESTING SPRING RANGE 050-460



NONE FAVORABILITY - METALLIC/GEOTHERMAL

NONE FLPMA MINING CLAIMS

MINERAL FAVORABILITY AND MINING CLAIMS

RESTING SPRING RANGE 050-460

CHAPTER 4
Environmental Consequences

CHAPTER 4

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

SILVER PEAK RANGE WSA (NV-060-338)

Proposed Action (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

The Proposed Action recommends 16,666 out of 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA as suitable for wilderness designation. In adddition to the recommended suitable acreage of the WSA, an additional 1,184 acres adjacent to the area would also be recommended suitable under the Proposed Action. The remaining 17,234 acres of the WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

All wilderness values in the 17,850 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would receive special legislative protection. Wilderness values located within the area recommended nonsuitable would not be afforded the same protection as those given under wilderness designation.

Naturalness (Suitable Portion)

The 17,850-acre area would be closed to motorized recreational use, eliminating any use that might presently be occuring. As the recommended suitable portion of the WSA is extremely rugged and pristine, containing no ways or roads, it is determined that motorized recreational use occurs rarely or not at all.

The suitable portion of the WSA will be withdrawn from mineral entry and leasing, thereby protecting the naturalness values of the area. However, exploration or development of claims showing validity is not projected to occur within this portion of the WSA. Consequently, naturalness values within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA would be retained under the Proposed Action.

Naturalness (Nonsuitable Portion)

The 17,234 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open for motorized recreational use. This use would be restricted to isolated portions due to the area's extremely rugged landscape. Mineral activity projected for the nonsuitable area's northeast and northwest sides would provide approximately 5.5 miles of new access routes, facilitating off-road driving and sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting and woodcutting in these areas. In addition, a marginal amount of motorized recreational use would occur along the area's southern border, where the landscape is somewhat less inhibiting.

Mineral exploration and development is expected to occur within the western portion of the nonsuitable area. The surface disturbance associated with this projected mineral activity, including the construction of 50 drill pads and 2.5 miles of road, extraction of minerals from an open pit mine and waste deposition would physically disturb and impair the natural character of 12 acres.

Exploration and development of claims along the nonsuitable area's eastern boundary are projected northwest of Mud Spring. The construction of work pads, storeage facilities, 3 miles of road and the deposition of waste would physically disturb and impair the natural character of 24 acres.

Within the nonsuitable area projected mineral activity and development, increased motorized recreational use and wood cutting would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil and scarify topography. The resultant scars and patches of denuded ground across the landscape would be visible for years. These surface disturbances would impair the natural character of approximately 1,800 acres of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Suitable Portion)

Wilderness values of outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. The WSA's most scenic and secluded areas are located within the recommended suitable portion. Icehouse Canyon and Piper Peak are two of the area's most unique features creating points of interest for hikers and backpackers. The protection of wilderness designation would insure the continued existence of these two scenic and primitive recreational areas.

Mineral exploration and development projected to occur within the nonsuitable area would diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 400 acres of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. Intermittent sights and sounds of vehicle use would detract slightly from the feeling of solitude for those visitors close to this mineral exploration and development. Surface disturbance caused by this projected mineral development would detract from the scenic vistas that a backpacker, hiker, or photographer might presently enjoy along the eastern and western boundaries of the suitable area.

Opportunities for quality primitive recreational experiences would exist within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. These primitive recreational pursuits would include hunting, hiking, backpacking, nature study/photography and sightseeing. Primitive (non-motorized) recreational use within the suitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 170 visits annually.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Nonsuitable Portion)

Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within the northwestern and northeastern portions of the nonsuitable area would be diminished due to the sights and sounds of heavy mechanical equipment and other activities associated with projected mineral exploration and development. These sights and sounds would continue to occur in these areas until exploration ceases and/or through the life of the mine (approximately 10 to 15 years).

The sights and sounds of motorized vehicles, including campers, and the buzz of wood cutting equipment would be apparent along boundary roads and projected mineral development roads in the nonsuitable area. Over the long term, these activities would increase as more and more visitors utilize the accessible portions of the nonsuitable area. Such disturbances would limit opportunities for solitude and primitive recreational pursuits, ie. nature study/photography, backpacking and primitive camping, over approximately 3,734 acres of the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation over 13,500 acres of the nonsuitable portion of the WSA, including the Piper Canyon area and the immediate area around Jeff Davis Spring, would be retained. No surface disturbing activities are projected to occur within these areas and the rugged landscape limits motorized vehicle access. The topographical and vegetative features within these areas also provide adequate screening to block the sights and sounds of human activities. Primitive recreational use within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 80 visits annually.

Special Features

Special features in the WSA consist of deer, bighorn sheep, a wild horse herd and petrified wood located within the Icehouse Canyon wash area. The lava filled Silver Peak caldera, located within the northern portion of the WSA, provides scenic and geologic values. The scenic and geologic qualities of the Silver Peak Caldera and Icehouse Canyon would be preserved by wilderness designation, as these features lie within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. The wild horses, bighorn sheep and deer would experience negligible impacts from projected mining activities, woodcutting and motorized recreational use occuring within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. The primary habitats of these animals are located away from these areas of activity.

Conclusion

Designating the suitable portion of the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve the excellent opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the highly scenic and geologic values of the Silver Peak caldera area and Icehouse Canyon. However, wilderness values of naturalness, solitude and primitive recreation would be slightly impaired along the suitable area's northeast and northwest borders (approximately 400 acres) due to projected mineral activity occuring within the adjacent nonsuitable area. Wilderness values of naturalness, solitude, and opportunities for primitive recreation would be negetatively impaired within approximately 3,734 acres of the nonsuitable area. These impacts would be concentrated along the periphery of the nonsuitable area. The disturbances would be related to projected mineral exploration and development activities, off-road motorized vehicle use and wood harvesting. The remaining 13,500 acres of the nonsuitable portion would retain their wilderness values. The WSA's special features, including bighorn sheep and wildhorses would experience only negligible impacts under the Proposed Action. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be preserved.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close to 17,850 acres of the WSA recommended suitable to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 5 visits or less of motorized recreational use annually. Public land more conducive to motorized recreation activities is available throughout the region. Motorized recreational use foregone would be absorbed within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and on surrounding public land. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

The 17,234 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized recreational use. Use would gradually continue to increase, but is not expected to exceed 100 visits annually. The rugged terrain of the WSA is not conducive to off-road vehicle driving. The 5.5 miles of new road, projected for the nonsuitable area as a result of mineral development, would open a small portion of the area to motorized recreationists for vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, hunting access, wood cutting and collecting and a limited amount of off-road driving. No recreational developments or facilities are proposed for the Silver Peak Range WSA.

Conclusion

Approximately five visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 17,850 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the 17,850 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are approximately 14,710 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and approximately 160 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Exploration and/or development of potential mineral resources within this portion of the WSA is not projected to occur, as the most favorable locations for exploration and development of mineral resources exists within the portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable, therefore impacts are not expected.

All lands within the 17,234 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to mineral entry and leasing. Included are approximately 10,240 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and approximately 1,310 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims are projected along the western and eastern boundaries of the nonsuitable area. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected for development.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of valid existing claims are projected to occur within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected to be developed. Impacts on exploration and development of mineral resources are not expected.

Impacts on Water Sources

Under the Proposed Action, one intermittent and four perennial springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA would be afforded protection from surface disturbing activities under wilderness designation. Impacts to these water sources are not expected.

The three perennial springs located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would not receive protection from surface-disturbing activites provided under wilderness designation. The construction of an access road associated with projected mineral exploration and development would adversely impact one of these springs. Siltation resulting from the road construction would degrade the water quality of the spring. Impacts are not expected as no surface disturbing activities are projected to occur within the vicinity of the remaining two springs.

Conclusion

For those five springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Of the three springs located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA one would be adversely impacted due to projected surface disturbing activities. No adverse impacts are anticipated for the remaining two springs located within the nonsuitable area.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

There would be no unavoidable adverse impacts on the 17,850 acres designated wilderness.

On the 17,234 acres designated nonwilderness, the unavoidable adverse impacts would be those associated with the loss of wilderness values from increased motorized recreational use and mineral exploration and development. Some of the impacts from projected mineral activity may be reduced by careful examination and mitigating stipulations in approved Notices of Intent and Plans of Operations.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

On the 17,850 acres designated wilderness, the wilderness values would be protected.

On the 17,234 acres not designated wilderness, all present uses would continue. Motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development would reduce wilderness values.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

On the 17,850 acres designated wilderness, no irreversible or irretrievable commitments of wilderness values are expected.

On the 17,234 acres designated nonwilderness, mineral exploration and development would create an irreversible commitment of wilderness resources.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 33,900 acres of public land in the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation, and all wilderness values would be protected by legislative mandate.

Naturalness

The entire area would be closed to motorized recreational vehicles, eliminating 40 visits of motorized recreational use estimated to occur annually within the study area. However, uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would occur along the study area's boundary roads, diminishing naturalness values within a small portion (approximately 400 acres) of the WSA.

Subject to valid existing rights, wilderness designation would withdraw the WSA from mineral entry. Energy exploration would be precluded from the area, thereby preserving scenic features throughout the majority of the WSA.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims are projected to occur within the northwest portion of the WSA, along the boundary road. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource while protecting the right of the operator. Surface disturbance associated with exploration and development activities would include the construction of 2.5 miles of access road, the construction of drilling pads, the extraction of minerals from a small open pit gold mine, and the construction of a waste dump. These activities would compact and remove soil and vegetation, scarifying the landscape, and physically disturbing 12 acres.

West and north of Mud Spring, along the WSA's eastern boundary, mineral exploration and development are projected. Exploration of valid claims would initiate the development of a medium-sized underground mine. Projected exploration and development activities would include the construction of 3 miles of road, drill pads and support facilities. Development of the mine would initiate the extraction of the mineral resource and the deposition of waste. These activities would compact and remove soil and vegetation, and scarify the landscape. A total of 24 acres would be physically disturbed from this activity.

Surface disturbance and activites occuring around both of the projected mines and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would impair the perception of naturalness within approximately 800 acres of the WSA. These activites would create long term adverse impacts to this portion of the WSA.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Solitude and primitive recreational opportunities within the majority of the WSA would be retained under the All Wilderness Alternative. Except for occassional uncontrollable use, motorized recreational use would be eliminated from the WSA. Elimination of this use would contribute to the enhancement of solitude within the WSA.

Noise and visual intrusions associated with projected mineral exploration and development along the eastern and western boundaries would impair the perception of solitude within close proximity of these activities. The use of motorized vehicles, within the mined area and along the access roads out to the WSA's boundaries, would delete any opportunities for solitude that might exist prior to this activity. In addition, the visitors' aesthetic enjoyment would be diminished when looking from higher elevations within the WSA towards the projected areas being mined.

The ability to experience solitude or primitive types of recreational activities would be diminished on approximately 1,500 acres within the WSA, due to the sights and sounds created by mineral activities and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use.

Opportunities for quality recreational experiences would be enhanced within the WSA under the All Wilderness Alternative. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach an estimated 280 visits annually.

Special Features

Wilderness designation would enhance the protection and preservation of the major points of interest and features within the WSA, including the Silver Peak caldera, Icehouse Canyon, Piper Canyon and Peak.

Conclusion

Designating the WSA as wilderness would preserve the scenic and natural qualities of the WSA. The outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and the special features of Silver Peak caldera and Icehouse and Piper Canyons. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair natural values and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation over approximately 1,500 acres of the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close the 33,900-acre Silver Peak Range WSA to all forms of motorized recreational use. Approximatley 40 visits annually of motorized recreational use, including off-road driving, hunting access, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and wood collecting, would be eliminated from the WSA. Public land that offers similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region. Therefore, motorized recreational use foregone in the WSA would be absorbed on surrounding public lands.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use of 40 visits annually would be foregone from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the Silver Peak Range WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 24,950 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and 1,470 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims along the eastern and western boundaries of the WSA are projected to take place after designation. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts to the wilderness resource while protecting the right of the operator. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals would be developed. Impacts on the exploration and development of existing valid claims are not projected.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals would occur. No other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected, consequently no impacts to development of valid existing claims would occur.

Impacts on Water Sources

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, one intermittent and seven perennial springs located within the WSA would be afforded protection from surface-disturbing activities . However, projected mineral exploration and development activities occuring within the WSA in areas of valid claims would affect one perennial spring. Water quality degradation of the spring would occur due to siltation brought on by surface disturbance for road construction. The stability of current water quality would be retained on the remaining seven springs located within the WSA.

Conclusion

Seven of the eight springs located within the WSA would retain their water quality stability due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Degradation of water quality due to silitation from road construction associated with projected mineral development would occur on one spring.

<u>No Wilderness Alternative</u> (No Action Alternative)

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, the entire 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The entire WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 33,900 acres would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.

Naturalness

Mineral exploration and development of claims are projected to occur along the WSA's mid-western border. Exploration in this area would involve the construction of some 50 drill pads. The development of a small open pit gold mine would entail mineral extraction, waste dump construction, and the development of 2.5 miles of road along the routes previously used for exploration. These activities would compact and remove topsoil and vegetation and scarify topography, resulting in 12 acres of physical disturbance.

The exploration and development of existing claims are projected to occur along the suitable area's eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. A projected medium sized underground mine would be developed on these claims. The development would consist of a portal area and a decline. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA. Exploration and development would initiate the construction of drill pads, 3 miles of road and storage and loading facilities. Extraction of minerals and deposition of waste material would occur with the development of the mine. These activities would physically disturb some 24 acres.

The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreational use. Only very limited areas within the WSA are conducive to off-road driving, thus restricting much of the motorized recreational use to the 5.5 miles of projected roads associated with mineral exploration and development. These newly constructed roads would facilitate motorized reacreational use within portions of the WSA which, at present, are restricted. Areas for vehicle camping and wood harvesting would become more accessible to recreationists, especially along the WSA's southern boundary and the access roads.

Motor vehicle related activities, including mining, hunting access, wood harvesting, vehicle camping and sightseeing would generate surface disturbance along the WSA's eastern, western and southern borders. These activities would impair the natural character of approximately 1,800 acres of the WSA, by denuding the landscape of vegetation and topsoil, scarifying the topography, and modifying the landscape. The remainder of the WSA should retain its natural character, as the area's rugged landscape restricts the use of motorized vehicles and additional mineral exploration and development are not projected to occur.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, opportunities for solitude along the eastern, western, and southern boundaries of the WSA would deteriorate due to the sights and sounds created by heavy equipment used in projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreational vehicles. Increased motorized activity would also diminish opportunities for primitive recreation

within these aforementioned areas of the WSA. Motorized vehicle traffic and surface disturbance from projected mineral exploration would disrupt portions of the WSA's pristine landscape, reducing the scenic qualities of the area for backpackers, photographers, hikers, and nature lovers. Areas offering seclusion would also be reduced within these portions of the WSA. Over the long term, visitors would not be able to obtain quality primitive recreational or solitude over approximately 3,734 acres of the WSA.

Opportunities for experiencing quality solitude and primitive recreation could occur throughout the WSA's remaining 30,166 acres. Those points of interest that attract visitors to the WSA because of scenic and secluded features, ie. Piper Canyon, Icehouse Canyon and Piper Peak, would be excluded from surface disturbing activities projected to occur within the study area. The WSA's core area affords hikers and backpackers quality routes for day and overnight trips. The rugged landscape and vegetation provide seclusion and cover, and the special points of interest provide scenic features and opportunities to view wildlife. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use within the WSA under the No Wilderness Alternative is projected to reach 245 visits annually.

Special Features

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, the WSA's special features and points of interest, primarily Piper Canyon, Icehouse Canyon, the Silver Peak caldera and the wildlife that inhabit these areas, would experience negligible impacts from nondesignation of the study area. All known and projected surface disturbing and visually impacting activities would take place away from these areas.

Conclusion

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be diminished within 3,734 acres of the WSA, due to projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreation activities. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 30,166 acres of the WSA. The WSA's special features, including bighorn sheep and wildhorses, would experience only negligible impacts under No Wilderness. The scenic and geological values of Icehouse Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

The entire WSA would be open to motorized recreational use. The majortiy of use would occur along the WSA's boundaries and along the 5.5 miles of projected roads associated with mineral development along the eastern and western boundaries. These areas will provide opportunities for hunting access, vehicle camping, wood harvesting, and sightseeing. Motorized recreational use is projected to increase from 40 to 100 visits annually. No adverse impacts to motorized recreational use are projected to occur.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no impact to motorized recreational use.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the Silver Peak Range WSA would remain open for mineral entry and leasing. Included are 24,950 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and 1,470 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. All mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on existing claims are projected along the western and eastern boundaries of the WSA. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals would be developed. No adverse impacts are projected.

No other mineral exploration and development are projected to occur within the WSA under the No Wilderness Alternative.

Conclusion

Under the No Wilderness Alternative, exploration of existing claims and the development of one surface and one underground mine for metallic resources are projected to occur within the WSA. There are no projected impacts on exploration for or development of mineral resources.

Impacts on Water Sources

One intermittent and seven perennial springs located within the WSA would receive no additional protection from surface-disturbing activites under the No Wilderness Alternative. However, surface disturbing activities associated with mineral development projected to take place within the WSA would adversely impact only one of the springs located in the area. The projected activities would initate siltation of the spring, degrading water quality.

Conclusion

Water quality stability in one of the eight springs within the WSA would be adversely impacted by silitation due to surface-disturbing activities associated with mineral activity projected to take place within the study area.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 33,620 acres would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. Included in this figure are 3,065 acres located adjacent to the study area's boundaries, which were not part of the original WSA. These additional acres were included so as to establish a more recognizable boundary based on topography. The remaining 3,345 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

All wilderness values in the 33,620 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would receive special legislative protection. The 3,345 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open for motorized recreational use and mineral entry and leasing.

Naturalness (Suitable Portion)

The 33,620 acres recommended suitable would be closed to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 30 visits of motorized recreational use annually. This would improve the naturalness values within those areas of the recommended suitable portion accessible to motorized vehicles. However, uncontrollable motorized recreational use along the WSA's boundaries would cause the compaction and removal of vegetation and topsoil, physically diminishing naturalness values on approximately 500 acres of the recommended suitable area.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims along the recommended suitable area's western border are projected after designation. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource, while protecting the right of the operator. Surface disturbance associated with projected exploration and development activities would include the construction of two miles of road, construction of drill pads and waste dump, and the extraction of minerals from a small open pit gold mine. These activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil and scarify the topography physically disturbing some 11 to 12 acres. The physical scars on the landscape from this activity would last for years.

The exploration and development of existing claims are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA along the eastern boundary, near Mud Spring. A projected medium sized underground mine would be developed on these claims. The development would consist of a portal area and a decline. Processing facilities would be located outside of the WSA. Exploration and development activities consisting of drill pad, road, and facility construction and the extraction of minerals would scarify topography, compact and remove topsoil and vegetation over some 23 to 24 acres. These surface disturbances would physically scar the landscape for many years.

Surface disturbance and activites occuring around both of the projected mines and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use along the mining access roads and southern boundary would impair natural values over approximately 700 acres of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA.

Naturalness (Nonsuitable Portion)

The 3,345 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open for motorized recreational use. Mineral activity projected for the suitable area's east and west side would facilitate the construction of two, one-half mile access roads across the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. These newly projected roads would provide recreationists access into these areas. Such recreational pursuits would include vehicle camping, sightseeing, wood harvesting, and hunting access.

Projected road construction and motorized recreational use occuring within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would disturb the natural qualities of the area by scarifying and denuding the landscape.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Suitable Portion)

Wilderness values of outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. The WSA's most scenic and secluded areas are located within the recommended suitable portion. Icehouse Canyon and Piper Peak are two of the area's most scenic features and points of interest for hikers and backpackers. The protection of wilderness designation will insure the continued existence of these two scenic and primitive recreational areas. Other special features of the area, bighorn sheep populations, wildhorse populations, wildlife, and evidences of geologic activity located within the suitable portion of the WSA, would receive added protection from wilderness designation.

Noise and visual intrusions associated with projected mineral exploration and development along the eastern and western boundaries and along the southern boundary where uncontrollable motorized vehicle use will occur would impair the perception of solitude within the immediate vicinity of these areas. The use of motorized vehicles within the mined area and along the access roads out to the recommended suitable area's boundaries would eliminate any opportunities for solitude that might exist prior to this activity. In addition, the visitors aesthetic enjoyment would be diminished when looking from higher elevations within the suitable area towards the areas of projected mining activity.

Within the immediate vicinity of the projected mineral activity and along the southern boundary road, primitive recreational experiences that exist at present would be impaired. The possibility of observing wildlife and taking photographs of a pristine landscape within these areas would be reduced.

Activities associated with projected mineral exploration and development and the uncontrollable use of motorized vehicles would impair opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation on approximately 1,000 acres of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA.

Opportunities for quality primitive recreactional experiences would be retained within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. Such primitive recreational pursuits would include hiking, primitive camping, backpacking, nature study/photography and hunting. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach 300 visits annually.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Nonsuitable Portion)

The sights and sounds from large vehicles and equipments associated with projected mineral exploration and development, motorized recreational vehicles, and power saws for wood harvesting would diminish solitude and opportunities for primitive recreation within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. Primitive recreational use within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA is projected to reach 10 visits annually.

Special Features

Under Alternative A, the WSA's special features and points of interest, primarily Piper Canyon Icehouse Canyon, and the Silver Peak caldera and the wildlife would be preserved and protected by designation of the suitable area. All known and projected surface disturbing and visually impairing activities would take place away from these special features and points of interest.

Conclusion

Wilderness values of naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation and special features would be retained within 32,620 of the 33,620 acres of the recommended suitable portion. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,000 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished and, in some instances lost, as a result of projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on the 3,345 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized vehicle use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The scenic and geological values of the WSA's special features of bighorn sheep, wildhorses, Icehouse and Piper Canyon and the Silver Peak caldera would be retained under Alternative A.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close to motorized recreational use 33,620 acres of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation, eliminating approximatley 30 visits of motorized recreational use annually. Public land offering similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region. Therefore, motorized recreational use foregone would be absorbed within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and on surrounding public lands. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

The 3,345 acres recommended nonsutiable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized recreational use. Use would gradually continue to increase, but is not expected to exceed 50 visits annually. Portions of the area would provide opportunities for sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, hunting access, and wood cutting.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 33,620 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Approximately 30 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the 33,620 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 21,925 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and 1,295 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims are projected after designation along the eastern and western boundaries of the WSA. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource, while protecting the right of the operator. One surface and one underground mine for metallic minerals are projected to be developed. Adverse impacts are not projected to occur on the exploration and development of valid existing claims.

The recommended nonsuitable area encompasses 3,025 acres having a moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and 175 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals. Mineral activity within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is not projected to occur. Two short access roads, one along the eastern border and one along the western border, would be constructed through the nonsuitable area as support for mineral exploration and development occuring within the recommended suitable area. No other mineral activity is projected to occur within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected to occur. As exploration of valid existing claims and the development of two mines are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, no impacts would occur.

Impacts on Water Sources

Under Alternative A, one intermittent and six perennial springs, located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, would be afforded protection under wilderness designation from surface-disturbing activities. However, no activities are anticipated to occur within this area. Stability of current water quality would result from this protection.

The one perennial spring located within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA would not receive protection from surface disturbance resulting from projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreational use. This spring is proximate to projected mining activities on the eastern boundary and water quality degradation from silitation due to these actions would occur.

Conclusion

For those seven springs located within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, water quality stability would be retained due to the protection from surface-disturbing activities provided by wilderness designation. Water quality stability of one spring, located within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA, would be adversely impacted by siltation resulting from projected mineral development activities.

PIGEON SPRING WSA (NV-060-350)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 3,575 acres of the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The entire WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and none of the area's limited scenic and natural features would receive special legislative protection.

Naturalness

Mineral exploration is expected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. Projected exploration would involve cross country travel with a track mounted drill rig, crossing up to 1 mile of the WSA. Up to 100 drill pads would be constructed within the north-central portion of the study area. The construction of these drill pads would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil. When drilling activities are complete, patches of denuded ground would be visible for many years. A total of 2 acres would be physically disturbed from this mineral exploration activity.

The entire WSA, including 1 mile of projected way associated with mineral exploration, six existing ways and a cherrystemmed road, would remain open for motorized recreational use. The open terrain and numerous ways located along the WSA's eastern and southern borders allows for intensive motorized recreational use. The projected 1 mile of new way associated with mineral exploration would facilitate vehicle-related recreation and wood cutting within the northern portion of the WSA. The increased and concentrated use of motorized vehicles and mineral exploration activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil, scarify the landscape and in some instances modifiy landforms. Further degradation of the already unnatural area (2,138 of the 3,575 acres of the WSA) would continue.

The south-central core of the area, approximately 1,437 acres of the WSA, would be protected from surface disturbing activities. Mineral exploration and development are unlikely to occur and the area's rugged landscape restricts the use of motorized vehicles. The natural features and scenic qualities of the small canyon occuring in this portion of the WSA would be preserved.

No new range, wildlife or recreation developments or facilities are planned in the WSA. No range developments or wildlife habitat projects are located within the WSA.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Due to the area's small size, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation do not exist within the WSA. Those opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that might exist would be found along the canyon within the south-central portion of the WSA. All other portions of the WSA would be subjected to the sights and sounds of motorized vehicles, either from recreational users or projected mineral exploration. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach 20 visits within the WSA annually.

Special Features

The WSA was found to have no special features or points of interest that would enhance wilderness values.

Conclusion

The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation that exist within the 2,138-acre unnatural portion of the WSA would be diminished. Under nondesignation naturalness values and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be retained within the south-central core of the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

The entire WSA would be open to motorized recreational use. The majority of use would occur in the southern and eastern portions of the WSA where the terrain is conducive to motorized types of recreation. The southern portion of the WSA, along the Cucomonga Road, is within an identified intensive recreational use area. The area is used for vehicle camping, off-road driving, sightseeing, and photography. In addition, other parts of the WSA provide hunting access and opportunities for recreational prospecting. Motorized recreational use is projected to increase from 60 to 130 visits annually.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the Pigeon Spring WSA would remain open for mineral entry. Included are 3,575 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten, lead, and zinc. All mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of claims would involve the drilling of up to 10 holes per year, over a 10 year period. No discovery is projected and no development is likely to occur.

Conclusion

Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims is expected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. There would be no impacts on the exploration or development of mineral resources.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The only unavoidable adverse impacts would be those associated with the loss of naturalness from motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration. Some of these impacts may be reduced by careful examination and mitigating stipulations in approved Notices of Intent and Plans of Operation.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

Nondesignation of the WSA would allow all present short-term uses to continue. Motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration would reduce naturalness over the long term.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Without wilderness designation, the projected mineral exploration would create an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the naturalness values in all or part of this WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 3,575 acres of public land in the Pigeon Spring WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. This designation would not occur unless the contiguous CDCA WSA, Sylvania Mountains, is also designated. Pigeon Spring does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation unless considered in conjunction with the California unit.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation, and the limited natural features and opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation that exist within the area would be retained.

Naturalness

Natural features within approximately 1,437 acres of the WSA (south-central portion) would be retained under the All Wilderness Alternative. The southern and eastern portions of the area were determined not to be natural due to the extensive motorized vehicle use that occurs within this portion of the WSA and because of the numerous ways and mineral disturbances. The landscape within this portion of the WSA has been scarified and denuded of vegetation by these

activities. Such degradation would be visible for many years. However, designation of the WSA would close the area to motorized vehicle use, preventing further deterioration of most of the study area. Uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would occur along the southern and eastern boundary road (Cucomonga Canyon Road) as this road is well traveled and is considered to be within an intensive recreational use zone.

Subject to valid existing rights, wilderness designation would withdraw the WSA from mineral entry. Energy exploration would be precluded from the area, thereby preserving the natural south-central portion of the WSA.

Prior to designation, exploration of existing claims to determine validity is projected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. This exploration activity would involve the drilling of approximately 50 holes, disturbing .25 acres. Drill pad construction would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil, creating patches of denuded ground. A track mounted drill rig would cross one-half mile of the study area. A total of one acre would be physically disturbed by this activity. No discovery is projected on these claims prior to designation. Therefore, exploration for and development of metallic resources are not projected to occur after wilderness designation of the area.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Due to the area's small size, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within the WSA do not exist. The area is not of sufficient size to screen the sights and sounds of activities occuring outside the WSA. Any opportunities that might exist for solitude and primitive types of recreation could be obtained within the south-central portion (approximately 1,437 acres) of the WSA, along a small steep-walled canyon. The canyon does provide an extended area for hikers who are visiting the adjacent CDCA WSA, Sylvania Mountains. Primitive recreational use within the WSA is projected to reach 40 visits annually.

Special Features

The WSA was found to have no special features or points of interest that would enhance wilderness values.

Conclusion

Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,437 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. Less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation exist on the remaining lands. The projected mineral exploration activities and uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would continue to degrade any natural qualities that exist on the remaining lands.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close the 3,575-acre Pigeon Spring WSA to all forms of motorized recreational use. Approximately 60 visits of motorized recreational use, including off-road driving, hunting access, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and sightseeing, would be eliminated from the WSA. Public land that offers similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region; therefore, motorized recreational use foregone in the WSA would be absorbed on surrounding public lands. The impacts of shifting this motorized recreational use to these other lands would be negligible.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use of 60 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the Pigeon Spring WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry. Included are 3,575 acres having high favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, placer gold, molybdenum, silver, tungsten, lead and zinc. Mineral exploration is projected to occur within the WSA to prove validity of existing claims. Exploration activity prior to designation would involve drilling with track mounted drill rigs. The number of drill holes produced would be reduced from 100 under nondesignation of the area to 50 with designation of the WSA. No mineral discovery or development of mineral resources is projected to occur.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. Exploration to prove validity of existing claims is projected to take place prior to designation, reducing the exploratory drilling from 100 drill holes under nondesignation to 50 drill holes. Mineral discovery and development are not expected to occur.

QUEER MOUNTAIN WSA (NV-060-354)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 81,550 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The entire WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 81,550 acres would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.

Naturalness

Mineral exploration of existing claims is expected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. This activity would involve cross-country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, transversing two miles of the WSA and the construction of 150 drill pads. It is projected that the validity of these claims would initiate the development of a small open pit gold mine. Development activities would disturb one acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. These activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil and scarify topography, resulting in 11 to 12 acres of surface disturbance. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA. This proposed activity would take place within the northern portion of the WSA that has been identified as being unnatural because of scaring left from past mining activity.

The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreational use. The study area's northern, southern and eastern landscapes consist of sloping bajadas and wide sandy washes that are readily accessible to vehicles. Only a few isolated mountains and hills present any type of barrier to motorized vehicles within these areas of the WSA. In addition the 2 miles of new road associated with mineral development would increase accessibility into the WSA for motorized recreational vehicles. Motorized recreational users would have access to approximately 35,600 acres of the WSA, upsetting natural values by denuding the area's landscape.

The west-central core (approximately 45,950 acres) of the WSA would be protected from surface disturbances created by off-road vehicle use, as the area's inaccessible terrain restricts the use of motorized vehicles. In addition, no mineral exploration or development is projected to occur within this area. The natural qualities of this portion of the WSA would be preserved under the Proposed Action.

No range developments or wildlife habitat improvements exist within the WSA, nor are any planned for the area.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Under the Proposed Action, solitude opportunities within the northern, eastern and southern portions (approximately 35,600 acres) of the WSA would deteriorate due to the noise and visual intrusions created by heavy equipment used in projected mineral exploration and development and increasing motorized recreational vehicles. Increased activity taking place within these portions would also diminish opportunities for primitive recreation, although few opportunities exist. The Queer Mountain area located within the southern portion of the WSA would provide limited opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, as the landscape offers some screening and the location makes for an easily accessible short day hike/exploration experience.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreational experiences would be retained within the west-central portion (approximately 45,950 acres) of the WSA. Numerous ridges, canyons, hills and peaks create outstanding topographic screening in most of this mountainous region. A visitor could find a secluded spot almost anywhere in this part of the WSA. This area provides limited, but enjoyable areas for day hikes and primitive camping, and the scenic vistas are good, but not outstanding. Primitive recreational use within the WSA is projected to reach 130 visits annually.

Special Features

A small population of deer and wildhorses inhabit the WSA. Impacts to these populations of wildlife from increased motorized recreational use and mineral activity would be negligible.

Conclusion

Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 35,600 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost due to audio, visual and surface disturbances created by increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 45,950 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

The entire WSA would be open to motorized recreational use. The majority of use would occur along the periphery of the WSA, within the bajadas and wide sandy washes. These areas provide opportunities for off-road driving, hunting access, vehicle camping, sightseeing, and recreational prospecting. Motorized recreational use is projected to increase from an estimated 175 to 315 visits annually.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to motorized vehicles. There would be no adverse impact to motorized recreational use.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the Queer Mountain WSA would remain open for mineral entry and leasing. Included are approximately 35,845 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals and approximately 21,120 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals. All mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development.

Exploration and development of several existing claims are projected within the Gold Mountain area. One small open pit gold mine would be developed. No adverse impacts are projected.

No other mineral exploration and development are projected to occur within the WSA under the Proposed Action.

Conclusion

Under the Proposed Action, exploration of existing claims and the development of one open pit gold mine are projected to occur within the WSA. There are no projected impacts on exploration for or development of mineral resources.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The unavoidable adverse impacts would be those associated with the loss of wilderness values from increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Some of the impacts from mineral activity may be reduced by careful examination and mitigating stipulations in approved Notices of Intent and Plans of Operations.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

Nondesignation of the WSA would allow all present short-term uses to continue. Motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development would reduce wilderness values over the long term.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Projected mineral exploration and development would create an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the wilderness resource in all or part of this WSA if not designated as wilderness.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 81,550 acres of public land in the Queer Mountain WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation, and all wilderness values would be protected by legislative mandate.

Naturalness

Naturalness values would be retained as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational vehicles and eliminating 175 visits of motorized recreational use estimated to occur annually within the study area. However, uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would occur along the boundary roads, within the bajadas and wide sandy washes located in the southern and northern portions, affecting approximately 8,000 acres of the WSA. Naturalness values that exist within this portion of the WSA would deteriorate as a result of this activity.

Subject to valid existing rights, wilderness designation would withdraw the WSA from mineral entry. Energy exploration would be precluded from the area, thereby preserving the WSA's quality scenic features.

Mineral exploration to prove validity of existing claims is expected to occur within the northern portion (Gold Mountain) of the WSA prior to designation. Projected exploration activity would involve the drilling of approximately 75 holes, disturbing .4 acre. A low pressure wheeled vehicle would cross 1.5 miles of the study area. These mineral exploration activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil on approximately two to three acres. This projected surface disturbance would take place within the northern portion of the WSA that has been identified as being unnatural as a result of scaring left by past mining activity.

No range developments or wildlife habitat improvements exist within the WSA, nor are any planned for the area.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Solitude opportunities within portions of the WSA would be enhanced under the All Wilderness Alternative. Except for occassional uncontrollable use, motorized vehicles would be eliminated from the WSA. Areas of seclusion would be more available to visitors throughout the WSA. Opportunities for solitude within the immediate vicinity of the WSA's boundaries and on the sloping bajadas (approximately 13,000 acres) would be impaired, due to the visibility and noise of motorized activities occuring along the boundary roads and in adjacent areas.

Opportunities to experience primitive types of recreational activities would be enhanced within the WSA, by the closure of motorized recreational use. Visitors to the area would be more inclined to utilize the wide sandy washes and low hills located outside the west-central core portion of the study area, as encounters with motorized vehicles would be reduced. Primitive recreational use including hiking, backpacking, primitive camping and nature study is projected to reach 150 visits annually.

Special Features

Wilderness designation would enhance the protection and preservation of the populations of deer and wildhorses.

Conclusion

The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, and to enhance opportunities to view deer and wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qualities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 13,000 acres of the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close the 81,550-acre Queer Mountain WSA to all forms of motorized recreational use. Approximately 175 visits of motorized recreational use, including off-road driving, hunting access, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and sightseeing, would be eliminated annually from the WSA. Public land that offers similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region, therefore, motorized recreational use foregone in the WSA would be absorbed on surrounding public lands. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use of 175 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the Queer Mountain WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are approximately 35,066 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals and approximately 21,120 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals.

Limited exploration of several claims to prove validity is projected within the Gold Mountain area prior to designation. Exploration activity would involve drilling and the crossing of 1.5 miles of the study area with low pressure wheeled vehicles. The 150 exploratory holes projected to be drilled without wilderness designation would be reduced to 75 exploratory holes with wilderness designation. The absence of a mineral discovery on these claims prior to designation, would forego the development of an open pit gold mine under the All Wilderness Alternative. No exploration or development of minerals is expected to occur within any other portion of the WSA.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The 150 exploratory holes expected to be drilled if designation does not occur would be reduced to 75 holes if designation occurs. The projected development of one open pit gold mine would be foregone under this alternative.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 42,650 acres would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and 38,900 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

All wilderness values in the 42,650 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would receive special legislative protection. The 38,900 acres recommended nonsutiable for wilderness designation would remain open for motorized recreational use and mineral entry.

Naturalness (Suitable Portion)

The 42,650-acre area recommended suitable would be closed to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 35 visits of motorized recreational use annually. This would improve the naturalness values within those areas of the recommended suitable portion accessible to motorized vehicles. However, uncontrollable motorized recreational use would occur along the southern and western borders (approximately 1,200 acres) of the suitable area. The compaction and removal of vegetation and soils resulting from this use would slowly deteriorate the natural character of these lands.

No other surface disturbing activities are anticipated to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA.

Naturalness (Nonsuitable Portion)

The 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized vehicles. As most of the terrain within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is conducive to motorized types of recreational use, naturalness values that presently exist would be reduced on approximately 34,400 acres. The remaining 4,500 acres are inaccessible to motorized vehicles, therefore these lands would retain their natural qualities.

Mineral exploration to prove validity of existing claims is expected to occur within the northern portion of the WSA. This activity would involve cross-country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, transversing 2 miles of the WSA, and the construction of 150 drill pads. It is projected that a mineral discovery on these claims would initiate the development of a small open pit gold mine. Development activities would disturb 1 acre for extraction and 3.5 acres for waste deposition. Two miles of road would be developed along the route previously used for exploration. A total of 11.2 acres would be disturbed by mineral exploration and development activity. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA. This proposed activity would take place within the northern portion of the WSA that has been identified as being unnatural because of scaring left from past mining activity.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Suitable Portion)

Outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation that exist within this portion of the WSA would be maintained under Alternative A, due to the preclusion of motorized vehicles. However, the uncontrollable use of motorized vehicles along the southern border would impair opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation within approximately 1,200 acres. The area's mountainous terrain provides numerous secluded spots and sufficient screening to minimize encounters between visitors utilizing the area for primitive recreational experiences. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach 100 visits annually.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Nonsuitable Portion)

The noise and visual disturbance created by motorized recreational users and projected mineral exploration would diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation for those visitors in the nonsuitable portion of the WSA. This use would reduce available areas that provide seclusion and solitude. The sights and sounds of ongoing mining activity, ie. day to day drilling, hauling of ore and heavy equipment use, would continue through mineral exploration and the life of the mine (approximately 10 to 15 years). The continued presence of motorized vehicles along the boundary and access roads and across the landscape would diminish solitude and primitive recreational opportunities within 34,400 of the 38,900 acres of the recommended nonsuitable area. Primitive recreational use within this area is projected to reach 30 visits annually.

Special Features

Small populations of deer and wildhorses inhabit the WSA. Impacts on wildlife from increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral activity would be negligible.

Conclusion

Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation would be retained within 41,450 of the 42,650 acres of the recommended suitable area. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,200 acres of the suitable portion would be diminished due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 34,400 of the 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and activities related to projected mineral exploration and development. The WSA's special features, including populations of deer and wildhorses, would not be adversely impacted under this alternative.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close 42,650 acres of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation, to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 35 visits of motorized recreational use annually. Public land offering similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region. Therefore, motorized recreational use foregone would be absorbed within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA and on surrounding public land. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

The 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized recreational use. Use would gradually continue to increase, but is not expected to exceed 280 visits annually over the long term. Terrain within this portion of the WSA is primarily conducive to motorized types of recreational activities, such as vehicle camping, off-road driving, hunting access, recreational prospecting, and sightseeing.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would be eliminated on the 42,650 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation and approximately 35 visits would be foregone annually. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the 42,650 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 12,045 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and approximately 3,200 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals. Exploration and/or development of potential resources within this portion of the WSA is not projected, consequently, no adverse impacts to minerals would occur.

All lands within the 38,900 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to mineral entry and leasing. Included are 21,800 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and approximately 17,920 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals. Mineral resources would be available for exploration and development within the portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. Exploration of several claims is projected within the Gold Mountain area. This activity would involve cross-country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, transversing 2 miles of the WSA and the construction of 150 drill pads. It is projected that a mineral discovery on these claims would initiate the development of a small open pit gold mine. Development activities would include extraction and waste deposition. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA. No other mineral exploration or development are projected for the nonsuitable area. No adverse impacts to mineral exploration and development are projected to occur.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected. Exploration of existing claims and the development of one small gold mine are projected to occur within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA. No adverse impacts to mineral exploration and development are expected to occur within the WSA.

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS WSA (NV-060-355)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 66,800 acres of the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The entire WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and none of the wilderness values on 66,800 acres would receive the special legislative protection provided by wilderness designation.

Naturalness

Mineral exploration to prove validity is expected to occur within the southern portion of the WSA. Projected exploration would involve cross country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, crossing up to 5 miles of the WSA. Up to 100 drill pads would be constructed within the Helmet Mountain area. Development activities would entail the extraction of minerals and deposition of waste products. Five miles of road would be developed along routes previously used for exploration. Surface disturbance associated with this exploration and development would physically disturb 19 to 20 acres within the Grapevine Mountains WSA. The natural landscape of the area would be disrupted from the projected mineral activity within the southwest portion of the WSA. Scars from mineral activity would be visible from the southwest boundary road to the southwest side of Helmet Mountain, impairing the perceived naturalness over approximately 700 acres of the WSA.

Under the Proposed Action, continued use of gravel pits located along the WSA's northwestern boundary would be utilized. Extraction of sand and gravel from these existing pits would physically disturb up to 160 acres.

The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreational use. The study area's northern landscape consists of an open bajada and wide sandy washes that are readily accessible to vehicles. Very few natural barriers exist within this portion of the WSA that would detour motorized vehicle use. In addition, the projected 5 miles of new road associated with mineral exploration and development would increase accessibility into the WSA for motorized vehicles. Motorized recreational users would have access to approximately 38,000 acres of the WSA, upsetting the natural character by altering the area's landscape.

The central core area (approximately 28,800 acres) of the WSA would however, be protected from surface disturbing activites since mineral exploration and development are unlikely to occur and the area's rugged landscape restricts the use of motorized vehicles. The natural features and scenic qualities of this portion of the WSA would be retained under the Proposed Action.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Under the Proposed Action, solitude opportunities within the bajada, alluvial fan and southwest portion (approximately 38,000 acres) of the WSA would deteriorate due to the annoying sights and sounds created by heavy equipment used in projected mineral exploration and development and motorized recreational vehicles. Increased activity would also diminish opportunities for primitive recreation within the Helmet Mountain area, currently the main destination point for hikers and visitors using the WSA. Visitors into the WSA are more apt to view deer in this area and capture scenic photographic shots of the colorful landsape. Over the long term, visitors would be less likely to obtain quality primitive recreational experiences along the western face of Helmet mountain, the bajada areas, and large washes.

Outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreational experiences would be retained within the central portion (approximately 28,800 acres) of the WSA. The area's rugged landscape and vegetative cover would tend to screen the sights and sounds of activites occurring within the WSA and provide numerous locations for seclusion. Opportunities exist for hikers, backpackers and photographers to observe wildlife and wildhorses, and to view scenic vistas and geological features. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use within the WSA is projected to reach 100 visits annually.

No new range, wildlife or recreation developments or facilities are planned in the WSA. Maintenance of an existing 2 mile fence would not affect wilderness values in the WSA.

Special Features

A small population of wildhorses inhabit the WSA. Impacts to this herd from increased motorized vehicle use and mineral activity would be negligible.

Conclusion

Wilderness qualities of naturalness and solitude that exist within 38,000 acres of the WSA would be diminished and, in some instances, lost to audio, visual and surface disturbances created from increased motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development. Wilderness qualities would be retained within the remaining 28,800 acres of the WSA. Impacts to special features would be negligible.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

The entire WSA would be open to motorized recreational use. The majority of use would occur along the periphery of the WSA, within the bajada and open flat areas, along the wide sandy washes, and within the study area's southwest corner and Helmet Mountain area (over approximately 38,000 acres). These areas provide opportunities for dirt-biking, off-road driving, hunting access, and vehicle camping. Motorized recreational use is projected to increase from 130 to 260 visits annually.

No recreational facilities or developments are proposed for the Grapevine Mountains WSA.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use will be the benefiting activity as a result of the entire WSA remaining open to vehicles and the development of new access routes associated with projected mineral activity. No adverse impacts to this use is expected to occur.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the Grapevine Mountains WSA would remain open for mineral entry and leasing. Included are 19,420 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals and 31,360 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallics. All mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development.

Exploration of existing claims is projected to occur within the Helment Mountain area. Exploration would involve cross country travel with low pressure wheeled vehicles, crossing up to 5 miles of the WSA, and the construction of up to 100 drill pads. A mineral discovery would initiate the development of one small mine which would entail the extraction of metals, waste deposition, and the construction of 5 miles of road. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA.

Sand and gravel deposits would be extracted from four existing sites located along the WSA's western boundary.

Conclusion

Mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development. Exploration of existing claims and development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the WSA. Sand and gravel deposits would be extracted along the WSA's western boundary. There are no projected adverse impacts on the exploration for and development of mineral resources.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

Unavoidable adverse impacts would be those associated with the loss of wilderness values from increased motorized vehicle use and projected mineral exploration and development. Some of the mineral impacts may be reduced by careful examination and mitigating stipulations in approved Notices of Intent and Plans of Operation.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

Nondesignation of the WSA would allow all present short-term uses to continue. Motorized recreational use and projected mineral exploration and development would reduce wilderness values over the long term.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

The projected mineral exploration and development would create an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the wilderness resource in all or part of this WSA if not designated as wilderness.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 66,800 acres of public land in the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation, and all wilderness values would be protected by legislative mandate.

Naturalness

Naturalness values would be retained by closing the WSA to motorized recreational vehicles and eliminating 130 visits of motorized recreational use estimated to occur annually within the study area. However, uncontrollable motorized vehicle use would occur along the boundary roads, in the existing gravel pits and major washes, affecting approximately 5,000 acres of the WSA. The naturalness character within this portion of the WSA would deteriorate as a result of this activity.

Subject to valid existing rights, wilderness designation would withdraw the WSA from mineral entry. However, exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims are projected within the Helmet Mountain area of the WSA. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource, while protecting the right of the operator. Surface disturbance associated with exploration and development activities would include the development of 5 miles of access road, the

construction of up to 100 drill pads, mineral extraction and waste deposition. These projected mineral exploration and development activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil and scarify topography on approximately 19 to 20 acres. Scars from mineral activity would be visible from the southwest side of Helmet Mountain, impairing the perception of naturalness over approximately 700 acres within the WSA.

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, continued use of gravel pits located along the WSA's western boundary would be utilized by the Nevada State Highway Department. Extraction of sand and gravel from these existing pits would physically disturb up to 160 acres.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreational pursuits would be diminished on approximately 10,000 acres of the WSA as a result of audio and visual disturbances created by uncontrollable off-road vehicle use and projected mineral exploration and development activities. Uncontrollable off-road vehicle use would occur primarily along the periphery of the WSA, as this is the most accessible portion of the study area. Activities related to mineral exploration and development would occur within the southwest corner of the WSA, west of Helmet Mountain. These activities would prevail through exploration and the life of the mine, approximately 10 to 15 years.

The remaining 56,800 acres within the WSA would retain outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation under the All Wilderness Alternative. Visitors to the area would be more apt to utilize the bajadas and washes for hiking as a result of closing the WSA to motorized recreational use. The scenic and pristine qualities that enhance a hiker's and sightseer's visit into the WSA would be retained within these lands. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use within the WSA is projected to reach 130 visits annually.

Special Features

Wilderness designation would enhance the protection and preservation of the herd of wildhorses that inhabits the WSA.

Conclusion

The result of designating the WSA as wilderness would be to preserve wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude, and to enhance the protection of wildhorses. Activities related to projected mineral exploration and development and unauthorized off-road motorized recreational use would impair naturalness qualities and diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within approximately 10,000 acres of the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close the 66,800-acre Grapevine Mountains WSA to all forms of motorized recreational use. Approximately 130 visits annually of motorized recreational use, including off-road driving, hunting access, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting, and dirt-biking, would be

eliminated from the WSA. Public land that offers similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region; therefore, motorized recreational use foregone in the WSA would be absorbed on surrounding public lands. Impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use of 130 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the Grapevine Mountains WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 19,420 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals, gold, silver, and base metals and 31,360 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims within the Helmet Mountain area of the WSA are projected after designation. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource while protecting the right of the operator. Surface disturbance associated with exploration and development of one mine would include access and drill pad construction, mineral extraction and waste deposition. Processing facilites would be located outside the WSA.

Existing sand and gravel pits located along the WSA's western border would be utilized by the State Highway Department. These four gravel pits, encompassing 160 acres, were issued as material site rights-of-way prior to 1976, thereby, ensuring their use in perpetuity.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the WSA. The exploration of valid claims, the development of one mine for metallic minerals and the extraction of sand and gravel are projected to occur within the WSA under the All Wilderness Alternative. As no other mineral exploration and development within the WSA are projected, impacts to development of valid existing claims would not occur.

Alternative A (Partial Wilderness Alternative)

Under this alternative, 23,150 acres would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation and 43,650 acres would be recommended nonsuitable for wildernerness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

All wilderness values in the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would receive special legislative protection. The 43,650 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open for motorized recreational use and mineral entry and leasing.

Naturalness (Suitable Portion)

The 23,150-acre area recommended suitable would be closed to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use annually. This would improve the naturalness values within those areas of the recommended suitable portion accessible to motorized vehicles. However, uncontrollable motorized recreational use within the southwestern portion of the recommended suitable area would slowly deteriorate naturalness values over approximately 700 acres.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims within the Helmet Mountain area of the WSA are projected after designation. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource while protecting the right of the operator. Surface disturbance associated with exploration and development activities would include the construction of 2 miles of access road, the construction of up to 100 drill pads, the depositing of waste material and the extraction of minerals from a small mine. These activities would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil and scarify the landscape, physically disturbing 11 acres. Scaring of the landscape would be visible from the soutwest side of Helmet Mountain, impairing the perception of naturalness within approximately 700 acres of the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. The physical scars left upon the landscape would last for years.

Naturalness (Nonsuitable Portion)

The 43,650 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized vehicles. As most of the terrain within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA is conducive to motorized types of recreational use, naturalness values would be reduced throughout the area. Surface disturbance from continued use of the gravel pits along the western boundary and the construction of 3 miles of access road associated with the projected mineral development occuring within the recommended suitable area, would contribute to the loss of naturalness values within the western portion of the nonsuitable area. Naturalness values would be diminished on approximately 37,300 acres of the recommended nonsuitable area as a result of these activities. The remaining 6,350 acres are inaccessible to motorized vehicles and no mineral activity is projected to take place on these lands. Natural qualities would thus be retained.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Suitable Portion)

Outstanding opportunities for solitude and less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation would be retained within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. The most scenic and secluded areas are located within this portion of the WSA, providing primitive recreationists opportunities to view wildlife and various points of interest. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use within this area is projected to reach 90 visits annually. Under Alternative A, the recommended suitable portion of the WSA would receive the added protection of wilderness designation.

However, opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation would be reduced on the west side of Helmet Mountain where mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use are projected to occur. Surface disturbance and noise from the intermittent use of motorized equipment for exploration and mineral development would diminish areas of seclusion available within this portion of the WSA. The mineral acitivity proposed for Helmet Mountain would reduce the pristine scenic qualities of this area. Opportunities for viewing wildlife would also be diminished. It is estimated that the projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use would impair solitude and primitive recreational values within approximately 1,400 acres of the recommended suitable area.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation (Nonsuitable Portion)

The noise and visual disturbance created by motorized recreational use, road construction and the extraction of sand and gravel would diminish opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation on 37,300 of the 43,650 acres recommended nonsuitable. Areas of seclusion and solitude would be reduced on these lands; scenic features and opportunities for observing wildlife would be diminished for sightseers and hikers. Overall, the presence of projected ongoing mineral activity and motorized recreational use would adversely impact solitude and primitive recreational values. Opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreational pursuits would be retained on the remaining 6,350 acres of the nonsuitable area, as the landscape restricts use and screens the sights and sounds of motorized recreational use. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach 30 visits annually within the recommended nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

Special Features

A small population of wildhorses inhabits the WSA. Impacts to this herd from increased motorized vehicle use and mineral activity would be negligible.

Conclusion

Wilderness values of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude would be retained within 21,750 of the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. Wilderness values on the remaining 1,400 acres of the suitable area would be diminshed by projected mineral exploration and development and uncontrollable off-road vehicle use. There would be a loss of wilderness values on 37,300 acres of the nonsuitable area because of continued and increasing motorized recreational use and projected mineral activities. Wilderness values would be retained on the remaining 6,350 acres of the recommended nonsuitable area. The population of wildhorses that inhabit the WSA would not be adversely impacted under Alternative A.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close 23,150 acres of the WSA recommended suitable for wilderness designation to motorized recreational use, eliminating approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use annually. Public land offering similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region. Therefore, motorized recreational use foregone would be absorbed on surrounding public land and the impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

The 43,650 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to motorized recreational use. Terrain within this portion of the WSA is conducive to off-road vehicle driving, providing opportunities for sightseeing, vehicle camping, recreational prospecting and hunting access. Use would continue to increase, but is not expected to exceed 230 visits annually.

Conclusion

Approximately 25 visits of motorized recreational use would be foregone annually on the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the 23,150 acres recommended suitable for wilderness designation would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 10,500 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals.

Exploration and development of mineral resources on valid existing claims in the Helmet Mountain area within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA are projected after designation. These activities would be done in a manner that minimizes impacts on the wilderness resource while protecting the right of the operator. Activities associated with mineral exploration and development would include access and drill pad construction, mineral extraction and waste deposition. Processing facilities would be located outside the WSA. Impacts are not projected to occur on the exploration and development of valid existing claims.

All lands within the 43,650 acres recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation would remain open to mineral entry and leasing. Included are 8,920 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of metallic minerals and 31,360 acres having moderate favorability for the occurrence of non-metallic minerals. Mineral resources would be available for exploration and development within the portion of the WSA recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation. Extraction of sand and gravel from four existing pits located along the WSA's western border is expected to occur over the long term. Exploration and development of potential mineral resources within this portion of the WSA are not projected to occur. However, a 3 mile access road would be constructed across the nonsuitable portion of the WSA as support for projected mineral exploration and development occuring within the recommended suitable area.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed lands within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA. However, no mineral exploration or development of these lands is projected to occur. As exploration of valid existing claims and the development of a small mine for metallic minerals are projected to occur within the recommended suitable portion of the WSA, no impacts would occur. Extraction of sand and gravel resources would occur within the nonsuitable portion of the WSA.

RESTING SPRING RANGE WSA (NV-050-460)

Proposed Action (No Wilderness/No Action Alternative)

Under the Proposed Action, the entire 3,850 acres of the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

The entire WSA would be recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation and none of the area's natural features would receive special legislative protection.

Naturalness

The entire WSA would remain open for motorized recreational use. The study area's open terrain with large, driveable washes that penetrate all parts of the WSA, permits extensive motorized recreational use. The increased and concentrated use of motorized vehicles would compact and remove vegetation and topsoil. This activity would degrade the natural values that exist within the WSA.

No other surface disturbing activities or new range, wildlife or recreation development facilities are projected or planned in the WSA. No range developments or wildlife habitat projects are located within the WSA.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Due to the area's small size, narrow configuration and lack of topographic and vegetative screening, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within the WSA do not exist. The WSA would be subjected to the sights and sounds of motorized vehicles from recreational users. Primitive recreational (non-motorized) use is projected to reach 20 visits within the WSA annually.

Special Features

There are no known special features within the WSA.

Conclusion

Limited wilderness values of naturalness and opportunities for solitude and primitive and unconfined recreation would be lost within the WSA. However, the values lost do not meet the minimum wilderness criteria. No special features were found to exist within the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

The entire WSA would be open to motorized recreational use. This use would occur throughout the WSA as the area's terrain consists of low foothills and wide, driveable washes that penetrate all parts of the study area. The area is used for off-road driving and dirt biking. Motorized recreational use is projected to increase from 55 to 100 visits annually.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use would benefit as a result of the WSA remaining open to vehicles. No impacts to this use would occur.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

All lands within the Resting Spring Range WSA would remain open for mineral entry and leasing. Included are 3,850 acres having low favorability for the occurrence of metalic and non-metallic minerals. At present no deposits, prospects, or claims are known to exist within the WSA. Exploration and/or development of any potential mineral resources is not projected to occur within the WSA.

Conclusion

Although mineral resources within the WSA would be available for exploration and development, neither are projected to occur. There would be no impact on the exploration or development of mineral resources.

Adverse Impacts Which Cannot Be Avoided

The only unavoidable adverse impacts would be those associated with the loss of natural values from increased motorized recreational use.

Relationship Between Local Short-Term Uses of Man's Environment and the Maintenance and Enhancement of Long-Term Productivity

Nondesignation of the WSA would allow all present short-term uses to continue. Motorized recreational use would reduce naturalness values over the long term.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

No activities have been identified that would create irreversible and irretrievable commitment of any resources within the WSA.

All Wilderness Alternative

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, 3,850 acres of public land in the Resting Spring Range WSA would be recommended suitable for wilderness designation. This designation would not occur unless the contiguous CDCA WSA, Resting Spring Range, is also designated. The Resting Spring Range WSA does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California unit.

Impacts on Wilderness Values

Under the All Wilderness Alternative, the entire WSA would be recommended for wilderness designation, and the limited naturalness values and the less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation that exist within the area would be retained.

Naturalness

Naturalness values within approximately 1,400 acres (south-central portion) of the WSA would be retained under the All Wilderness Alternative. The elimination of motorized vehicle use would benefit natural values. However, the accessibility of the WSA to motorized vehicles and the area's isolated location make control of unauthorized motorized recreational use difficult. This uncontrollable use would compact and remove soil and vegetation, impairing naturalness values over approximately 2,450 acres.

Solitude and Primitive Recreation

Due to the area's small size, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation within the WSA do not exist. The area is not of sufficient size to screen the sights and sounds of activities occuring outside the WSA. Any opportunities that might exist for solitude and primitive types of recreation could be obtained within the south-central portion (1,400 acres) of the WSA. Primitive recreational use within the WSA is projected to reach 30 visits annually.

Special Features

No special features were found to exist within the WSA.

Conclusion

Natural features and limited opportunities for solitude and primitive types of recreation that exist on approximately 1,400 acres of the WSA would be retained under wilderness designation. The less than outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and naturalness values that exist on the remaining 2,450 acres would be diminished or lost due to uncontrollable motorized vehicle use. No special features exist within the WSA.

Impacts on Motorized Recreational Use

Wilderness designation would close the 3,850-acre Resting Spring Range WSA to all forms of motorized recreational use. Approximately 55 visits of motorized recreational use, including off-road driving and trail bike riding, would be eliminated from the WSA. Public land offering similar opportunities for motorized recreational use is located throughout the region; and could absorb use forgone in the WSA with negligible impacts.

Conclusion

Motorized recreational use of 55 visits would be foregone annually from the WSA. The impacts of shifting this use to other public lands nearby would be negligible.

Impacts on Exploration for and Development of Non-Energy Mineral Resources

Subject to valid existing rights, all lands within the Resting Spring Range WSA would be withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry and leasing. Included are 3,850 acres having low favorability for the occurrence of metallic and non-metallic minerals. At present no deposits, prospects, or claims are known to exist within the WSA. Exploration and/or development of any potential mineral resources is not projected to occur within the WSA. No impacts to mineral resources are projected within the WSA.

Conclusion

Exploration and development of mineral resources would be foregone on all unclaimed land within the WSA. As no exploration or development of mineral resources is projected within the WSA, no impacts would occur.

CHAPTER 5
Consultation and Coordination

CHAPTER 5

CONSULTATION, COORDINATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND LIST OF PREPARERS

Development of the recommendations for the Esmeralda - So. Nye Wilderness Final Environmental Impact Statement has included an on-going coordination and public participation effort. Federal Register notices and news releases have announced all steps of the process to date, including the study schedule, notices of intent for preparation of the EIS, notice of availability of the DEIS, notice of public hearings; and public comment periods.

Throughout the study, consultation and coordination has occurred with other Federal agencies; State, County and local governments; and the public. Additional coordination has occurred with the U.S. Geological Survey and Bureau of Mines. These two agencies are inventorying each WSA to determine its leaseable, locatable and saleable mineral potential. The BLM has supplied both agencies with maps and informatin of each WSA.

EIS REVIEW

The Esmeralda - So. Nye RMP/EIS was filed with the Environmental Protection Agency on November 16, 1984. At that time approximately 600 copies of the Draft EIS were sent to reviewing agencies, elected officials, organizations and any individuals who had expressed an interest in the planning process. Copies were also sent to 13 public libraries and 12 BLM offices. A news release was issued to local and regional news media announcing the Draft's availability. The public review period extended to February 19, 1985. See Table 5-1 for a partial list of those who received copies of the Draft RMP/EIS.

Formal public hearings were held on January 15, 1985 in Pahrump, Nevada, on January 16, 1985, in Goldfield, Nevada and on January 17, 1985 in Las Vegas, Nevada to receive input on the Draft Esmeralda - So. Nye RMP/EIS. All three hearings began at 7:00 P.M. and were announced through a letter included with the Draft RMP/EIS, through news releases and through publication in the Federal Register (Vol. 449, No. 223 Friday, November 16, 1984).

Transcripts of the public hearing are available for inspection at the Las Vegas District Office at 4765 W. Vegas Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Comments

A total of 63 letters of comment were received during the public review period on the draft RMP/EIS, of which 55 specifically addressed wilderness. In addition, four people at the public hearing spoke regarding the wilderness issue.

TABLE 5-1
AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PERSONS TO WHOM
THE DRAFT EIS WAS SENT

Congressional Delegation
- Senator Paul Laxalt, Nevada
- Senator Chic Hecht, Nevada
- Representative Harry Reid, Nevada
- Representative Barbara Vucanovich, Nevada

Federal Agencies
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- Department of Agriculture
  - Forest Service
  - Soil Conservation Service
  - Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service
- Department of Commerce
  - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Department of Defense
  - Nellis Air Force Base
  - George Air Force Base
  - Edwards Air Force Base
  - Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Energy
  - Bonneville Power Administration
  - Western Area Power Administration
- Department of the Interior
  - Bureau of Indian Affairs
  - Bureau of Mines
  - Bureau of Reclamation
  - Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Gologocial Survey
  - National Park Service
  - Office of Environmental Project Review
- Deparment of Transportation
- Environmental Protection Agency

State Agencies
- Office of the Governor
- Nevada State Clearinghouse (25 copies - distributes copies to State Agencies)
- Nevada Department of Wildlife
- State Senators and Assemblymen (Esmeralda and Nye Counties)
- University of Nevada, Reno and/or Las Vegas
  - Desert Research Institute
  - Fleischmann College of Agriculture
  - Center for Business and Economic Research
  - Department of Biological Sciences
  - Mackay School of Mines
  - Nevada Bureau of Mines

Local Government

- Nye County Commissioners
- Esmeralda County Commissiioners
- Armagosa Town Board
- Amargosa Planning Board
- Pahrump Town Board
- Pahrump Planning Board
- Pahrump Town Manager
- Nye County Planning Department
- Esmeralda County Game Management Board
- Beatty Town Board

Others

- Grazing Lease Holders within the RMP Area
- Nevada Power Company
- Sierra Pacific Power Company
- Valley Electric Association
- Nevada Bell
- Las Vegas District Grazing Advisory Board
- Nevada Cattlemen's Association
- Multiple Use Advisory Board on Federal Land Laws
- Las Vegas and Battle Mountain District Advisory Boards
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Resources Defencse Council
- Sierra Club
- Earth First
- The Wilderness Society
- Audubon Society
- Humane Society of Southern Nevada
- International Society for the Protection of Mustangs
- Nevada Miners and Prospectors Association
- Nevada Outdoor Recreation Association
- Nevada Wildlife Federation
- Nevada Woolgrowers Association
- Northern Nevada Native Plant Society
- Society for Range Management
- Sunshine Mining Company
- Foote Mineral Company
- Nevada League of Women Voters
- Industrial Mineral Ventures
- American Borate Corporation
- American Mining Congress
- Animal Protection Institute
- American Horse Protection Association
- Desert Tortoise Council
- Desert Bighorn Council
- Fraternity of Desert Bighorn
- Friends of Nevada Wilderness
- Greenpeace
- ORV Groups

Public Libraries

Amargosa Public Library
Star Route 15
Box 401-T
Lathrop Wells, Nevada 89020

Beatty Community Library
323 Montgomery
Beatty, Nevada 89002

Charleston Heights Library
800 Brush Street
Las Vegas, Nevada 89107

Clark County Community College
Learning Resource Center
3200 E. Cheyenne Ave.
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030

Clark County Library
1401 E. Flamingo Rd.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89109

Esmeralda County Public Library
County Courthouse
Goldfield, Nevada 89013

Esmeralda County Public Library
Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

Las Vegas Public Library
1762 E. Charleston Blvd.
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104

Mount Charleston Public Library
P.O. Box 269, S. R. 89038
Mt. Charleston, Nevada 89101

North Las Vegas Library
2300 Civic Center
North Las Vegas, Nevada 89030

Pahrump Public Library
Pahrump, Nevada 89041

University of Nevada, Reno
Getchell Library
Government Publications Dept.
Reno, Nevada 89507

Washoe County Library
301 S. Center Street
Reno, Nevada 89505

Bureau of Land Management Offices

Office of Public Affairs, BLM
18th and C Streets, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Nevada State Office
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, Nevada 89520

Battle Mountain District Office
North 2nd and South Scott Streets
Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Carson City District Office
1050 E. William Street
Carson City, Nevada 89701

Elko District Office
2002 Idaho Street
Elko, Nevada 89801

Ely District Office
Star Route 5, Box 1
Ely, Nevada 89301

Las Vegas District Office
4765 West Vegas Drive
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Tonopah Resource Area Office
Battle Mountain District
102 Old Radar Base Rd.
Tonopah, Nevada 89049

Winnemucca District Office
704 East 4th Street
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

Riverside District Office
1695 Spruce Street
Riverside, California 92507

Ridgecrest Resource Area Office
Riverside District
1414 A. N. Norma
Ridgecrest, California 93555

Needles Resource Area Office
Riverside District
P.O. Box 305
Needles, California 92363

All letters and testimony were reviewed to determine if they met the required criteria for response, i.e., discussion of the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement. Substantive comments which presented new data, questioned facts and/or analysis, or commented on issues bearing directly on the draft environmental impact statement or the environmental impacts of the alternatives were fully evaluated and given responses. Changes or additions to the draft environmental impact statement relating to the wilderness issue have been incorporated into this final wilderness statement.

Letters received during the public comment period which pertain to the wilderness issue have been reprinted in this final environmental impact statement. The four people who testified at the public hearings, addressing the wilderness issue, also submitted written comments of the same nature and therefore their testimony will not be reprinted.

All the letters have been reprinted in this document. The responses to the written comments are listed following the letters. Each response is given a number which corresponds to numbered paragraphs or sections in the actual public comments. See Table 5-2 for an index of comment letters.

CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER PLANS

Federal Agencies

After review of the Draft RMP/EIS by the National Park Service (NPS), they stated that the Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain WSAs should be designated as wilderness since they are adjacent to their administratively endorsed WSAs. During analysis of the BLM's WSAs it was determined that activities allowed as a result of nondesignation would not degrade wilderness values found in the NPS wilderness areas. Outside sights and sounds as a result of activities in the BLM WSAs were simply not significant enough in intensity to affect NPS's areas wilderness values. Therefore, the BLM does not consider its recommendation as inconsistent with NPS planning, since it neither precludes implementation of their land use plan in the Death Valley National Monument or degrades wilderness values on the NPS wilderness areas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service offered comments on the Esmeralda-So. Nye Draft RMP/EIS. Specific concerns were addressed regarding the Ash Meadows area. This area supports critical habitat for two endangered species of fish. As the Ash Meadows area does not lie within a WSA, their concerns did not pertain to this Wilderness FEIS.

State Agencies

Governor Richard H. Bryan, offering the consistency position for the State Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Wildlife, Minerals, State Lands, Forestry, Conservation and Natural Resources and the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, supports the Proposed Action for the Grapevine Mountains, Pidgeon Spring, Queer Mountain and Resting Spring Range WSAs. The State is opposed to any suitable recommendation for the Silver Peak Range WSA. The State feels that wilderness values are not high enough to outweigh mineral potential and that designation would further add to desert bighorn conflicts by not allowing the BLM to properly manage wild horses within the WSA.

The Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation) offered comments on the Esmeralda-So. Nye Draft RMP/EIS, referring to the known existence of several cultural resources. None of the identified cultural resources were located within the WSAs.

County Government

The General Plan for Nye County does not specifically address the subject of wilderness designation. However, wilderness designation is not consistent with the Esmeralda County Master Plan of 1976. The two following policies from that plan directly or indirectly speak to wilderness designation:

"....it is necessary that the entire county be kept open for prospecting, mining and related activities."

"Any withdrawal of land for wild horse or burro preserves or wilderness areas should be opposed. Designated primitive areas are also not recommended because they tend to encourage increased human use, get trashy, and generally "flag" areas for desecration." (Master Plan, Esmeralda County, p. 69).

In addition, the Esmeralda County Commission has consistently gone on record as opposing designation of any land in the county as wilderness and has passed a resolution stating this opinion.

LIST OF PREPARERS

Name	Responsibility	Education	Experience
Elena Arellano	Realty	BLM Professional Resource Management-Land	8 years BLM
L. Poppy Benson	Wilderness/ Recreation	B.S. Recreation Resource Management	1 year Forest Service 7 years BLM
Janaye Byergo	Wilderness/ Recreation/ Technical Writer	B.S. Recreation Administration	5 years BLM
Thomas Cook	Geology	B.S. Geography B.S. Geology, B.S., B.A. Accounting/MBA	6 years BLM
Robert H. Crabtree	Cultural Resources	B.A., M.A. Anthropology	30 years private 5 years BLM
Mike Ford	Wild Horse and Burros	B.S. Wildlife Management	8 years BLM
David Gillen	Geology	B.S. Mining Engineering	30 years private 2 years BLM
John Jamrog	Livestock Grazing	B.S. Forestry	10 years BLM
Kevin Leary	Soils/Water Resources	B.S. Soil Science	6 years BLM
Mark R. Maley	Wildlife	B.S. Wildlife Ecology	10 years BLM
Frank Maxwell	Editor	B.S. Renewable Natural Resources	1/2 year Forest Service 18 years BLM
Calvin McKinley	Wilderness	B.S. Agronomy	15 years Soil Conservation Service 7 years BLM
Stephen Mellington	Team Leader	B.S. Soil Science	9 years BLM
Victor Ross	Minerals	B.S. Mining Engineering	7 years BLM

TABLE 5-2
INDEX OF COMMENT LETTERS

Letter Number	Agency, Organization or Individual
1.	U.S., Environmental Protection Agency
2.	USDI, Geological Survey - Engineering Geology
3	USDI, National Park Service, Death Valley
4.	USDI, National Park Service, Western Region
5.	State of Nevada, Governor's Consistency Review Letter
6.	State of Nevada, State Office of Community Services
	State of Nevada, Governor's Consensus Review
	State of Nevada, Dept. of Agriculture
	State of Nevada, Dept. of Transportation
	State of Nevada, Dept. of Wildlife
	State of Nevada, Dept. of Minerals
	State of Nevada, Dept. of State Lands
	State of Nevada, Division of Forestry
	State of Nevada, Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (State Historic Preservation Office)
7.	State of Nevada, Division of State Lands
8.	American Film Institute
9.	Atlantic Richfield Company
10.	Defenders of Wildlife
11.	Inspiration Mines, Inc.
12.	Nevada Wildlife Federation (LV)
13.	Production Exploration Resources
14.	Reed Family Inventments
15.	Sierra Club
16.	Sierra Club
17.	Sunshine Mining Company
18.	The Nature Conservancys Group
19.	The Wilderness Society
20.	Wild Horse Organized Assistance
21.	Wildlife Management Institute
22.	Women In Mining
23.	Harry Melts
24.	S. M. Frankiel
25.	Daniel Cummings
26.	Betty, Rex and Scott Mason
27.	Susanne Madden
28.	Jo Neugent
29.	Elliott Bernshaw
30.	Jim Mayberry
31.	Randal Seech
32.	Virlis Fischer
33.	Lawrence A. Dwyer
34.	Maicea Stohlman and Gary Kohoutek
35.	Becky Parr

TABLE 5-2 (Continued)

Letter Number	Agency, Organization or Individual
36.	Joseph and Mary Viscuglia
37.	Iva M. Perkins
38.	Marsha George
39.	Glenn Miller
40.	Edward Dverr
41.	Ann Kersten
42.	Terry Woodin
43.	Gregory P. Ebner
44.	Drury Sherrod
45.	Sarah Bailey Gyer
46.	Lisa Faith Wood
47.	Stuart Claney
48.	Paul Clifford
49.	Walter Barbuck
50	Alison Hutchings
51.	Timothy Heidrich
52.	A. Huntington
53.	Duncan Williams
54.	Robert Furtek
55.	Lucy E. Trostle
56.	Cheri Cinkoske
57.	Marlee Ostrow
58.	Ann Pitchford
59.	John Swanson

Comment Letter

1-1

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
215 Fremont Street
San Francisco, Ca. 94105

February 21, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) titled RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR THE ESMERALDA-SOUTHERN NYE PLANNING AREA, ESMERALDA AND NYE COUNTIES, NEVADA. We have the enclosed comments regarding this DEIS.

We have classified this DEIS as Category EC-2, Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information (see attached "Summary of Rating Definitions and Follow-Up Action"). This DEIS is rated EC-2 because 1) clarification of Wilderness Study Area criteria is requested, 2) water quality and air quality issues need to be addressed, and 3) herbicide use must be discussed. The classification and date of EPA's comments will be published in the Federal Register in accordance with our public disclosure responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. Please send five copies of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to this office at the same time it is officially filed with our Washington, D.C. office. If you have any questions, please contact Patrick J. Cotter, Federal Activities Branch, at (415) 974-0948 or FTS 454-0948.

Sincerely yours,

Charles W. Murray, Jr.
Assistant Regional Administrator
for Policy and Management

Enclosure (3 pages)

F-11

Comment Letter

1-2

-1-

General Comments

Establishment of wilderness areas can benefit other resource and environmental values such as water quality and air quality. Designation of suitable land as "wilderness areas" tends to be environmentally preferable since it often affords a greater level of environmental protection. Accordingly, we have the following specific comments about the wilderness selection criteria in the DEIS.

1 1. The rationale for the Bureau of Land Management's "nonsuitable" declaration of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) is unclear. The specific WSAs include Grapevine Mountain, Queer Mountain and the Silver Peak Range.

2 a. The FEIS should document active and potential mineral claims, either metallic, nonmetallic, oil and gas, or geothermal, that preclude suitable declarations in the WSAs.

b. Areas where off-road vehicle (ORV) use is substantial within a WSA should also be included in the disclosure of nonsuitable areas.

3 2. The description of Alternative B presents arguments for suitable areas that are potentially manageable under BLM's authority. The FEIS should identify the criteria used to select suitable wilderness area in the Preferred Alternative (17,850 acres) versus Alternative B (99,420 acres). Pages 60-76 of the DEIS suggest that larger areas of the WSAs are suitable for wilderness designation.

Water Quality Comments

4 1. Water quality is addressed generally by referring to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BLM and the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection. A copy of this MOU should be included in the FEIS as an appendix. Implementation of the MOU and protection of water quality through this agreement should be discussed in the FEIS.

5 2. The FEIS should provide baseline information and a detailed map of water resources within the resource area. The FEIS should discuss the following factors indicating management measures to protect water quality:

6 a. Springs and wells,

b. Ponds and reservoirs,

c. Perennial streams and hydrographic basins, and

d. Riparian communities.

Comment Letter

1-3

-2-

3. Mitigation should be addressed in the FEIS, where possible, to provide adequate protection for water quality and maintenance of beneficial uses for each water resource listed above, especially riparian communities.

7 Air Quality Comment

The FEIS should provide baseline information for existing air quality in the resource area.

Herbicide Comments

1. The DEIS mentions an MOU between BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife which specifies procedures to be used for sagebrush alteration. This MOU should be summarized or included as an appendix in the FEIS.

8 2. There is only one sentence citing the use of herbicides for treatment of sagebrush areas (p. 15). The FEIS should explain the process that must be completed before herbicide application can begin.

3. The FEIS should discuss how Southern Oregon Citizens Against Toxic Spraying v. Clark (720 F.2d 1475 [1983]) will affect herbicide spraying programs in the resource area.

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 1

1 The criteria used in the selection of the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) considered the mineral potential of the WSAs as opposed to wilderness values. The Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) only recommended areas where the values of wilderness designation are capable of balancing the other resource values and uses which would be foregone due to wilderness designation.

2 This detailed information is documented and addressed in this Wilderness FEIS. Also, this information is documented in the Wilderness Technical Report prepared in conjunction with the RMP/EIS and is available by request at the Las Vegas Distric Office.

3 Please see response 1-1.

4 This MOU was discussed in the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP but is not addressed in this Wilderness FEIS.

5 Water resources related baseline data is presented in Chapter 3 of this FEIS.

6 Impacts on water sources is an issue that has been addressed for analysis in Chapter 4. Environmental Consequences, in this Wilderness FEIS. Critical water sources and impacts from the alternatives on water quantity and quality have been analyzed for the Silver Peak Range WSA. During the preparation of the Wilderness FEIS there were no activities proposed that were found to impact either the quantity or quality of ground water as a result of designation or nondesignation of the Silver Peak Range WSA as wilderness.

7 It was determined during the issue identification process for the Wilderness FEIS that no specific activities, proposed or projected, would occur within the WSAs that would impact air quality to a degree that could be quantitatively or qualitatively described due to extremely small disturbance areas.

8 Herbicide use will not occur in any of the WSAs.

Comment Letter

1-3

-2-

3. Mitigation should be addressed in the FEIS, where possible, to provide adequate protection for water quality and maintenance of beneficial uses for each water resource listed above, especially riparian communities.

7 Air Quality Comment

The FEIS should provide baseline information for existing air quality in the resource area.

Herbicide Comments

1. The DEIS mentions an MOU between BLM and the Nevada Department of Wildlife which specifies procedures to be used for sagebrush alteration. This MOU should be summarized or included as an appendix in the FEIS.

8 2. There is only one sentence citing the use of herbicides for treatment of sagebrush areas (p. 15). The FEIS should explain the process that must be completed before herbicide application can begin.

3. The FEIS should discuss how Southern Oregon Citizens Against Toxic Spraying v. Clark (720 F.2d 1475 [1983]) will affect herbicide spraying programs in the resource area.

C-143

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 1

1 The criteria used in the selection of the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) considered the mineral potential of the WSAs as opposed to wilderness values. The Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) only recommended areas where the values of wilderness designation are capable of balancing the other resource values and uses which would be foregone due to wilderness designation.

2 This detailed information is documented in the Wilderness Technical Report prepared in conjunction with the RMP/EIS and available by request at the Las Vegas District Office.

3 Please see response 1-1.

4 This MOU was discussed in the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP but is not addressed in this Wilderness EIS.

5 Water resources related baseline data is presented in Chapter 3 of this FEIS.

6 Water resources were found not to be affected by the designation or nondesignation of wilderness as management scenarios did not identify any activities proximate to these resources.

7 It was determined during the issue identification process for the Wilderness EIS that no specific activities, proposed or projected, would occur within the WSAs that would impact air quality to a degree that could be quantitatively or qualitatively described due to extremely small disturbance areas.

8 Herbicide use will not occur in any of the WSAs.

Comment Letter

2

United States Department of the Interior

GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
RESTON, VA. 22092

In Reply Refer To:
WGS-Mail Stop 423
DES 84/60

JAN 30 1985

Memorandum

To: District Manager, Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas, Nevada

From: Assistant Director for Engineering Geology

Subject: Review of draft environmental statement for Esmeralda-Southern Nye Resource Management Plan, Nye and Esmeralda Counties, Nevada

5-14

We have reviewed the draft statement as requested in a letter of November 16 from the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada.

We note in Table 2-5 that range improvement projects will include spring development as well as construction of 7 to 12 wells. This part of the plan does not seem to be included in the discussion of management prescriptions and management and improvement of water resources. The final statement should clarify the plans in this regard.

The discussion of mineral-resource potential is clear and well documented, although the addition of a map showing areas of mineral potential would be helpful.

The acreage of land classified as moderately favorable for metallic minerals should be 13,830 acres, not 13,380 acres (p. 102, par. 4, lines 2-3), for consistency with information provided elsewhere (for example, Summary Table 2, p. iv; p. 97, par. 5).

James F. Devine

Comment Letter

3-1.

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL MONUMENT
DEATH VALLEY, CALIFORNIA 92328

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L3023

December 21, 1984

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Draft Resources Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

We have reviewed the document and offer the following comments:

1. Both of the Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) that border Death Valley National Monument (060-0354 and 06-0355) appear to be suitable for wilderness designation. Neither one is included at any level in the Preferred Alternative and both are excluded from the No Action Alternative and Alternative A.

1 The Grapevine Mountains WSA (NV 060-0354) is adjacent and ecologically bound to the monument's proposed wilderness. The area contains known desert bighorn and deer range. The statements in the EIS on mineral potential in this area are not compelling to the point of excluding designation under Alternative B.

The Queer Mountain WSA (NV 060-0355) is also adjacent to Death Valley National Monument and enhances proposed National Park Service (NPS) wilderness. Again the statements in the EIS on mineral potential are not sufficiently compelling to exclude designation.

2. The NPS prefers the land disposal scheme in Alternatives B and C. Under these Alternatives, 10,726 acres in the vicinity of Beatty and Buck Spring would not be disposed. The area around Buck Spring is historic desert bighorn range and should be retained under Federal ownership.

Comment Letter

3-2

3 In the Amargosa area, west of Highway 373 (Highway 29), 26,880 acres are scheduled for disposal under the Preferred Alternative and Alternative A. This parcel is adjacent to and abutts Death Valley National Monument for 1.5 miles. The effect of water withdrawal from this land, should development occur, is not addressed in the EIS.

Sincerely,

Edwin L. Rothfuss
Superintendent

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 3

1 The objective of the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) for wilderness was to recommend only those areas for wilderness where the values of designation outweigh the values and uses which would be foregone. Both the Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain WSAs contain only moderate wilderness values with less than outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation. These values do not outweigh the WSAs moderate potential for minerals and geothermal resources. In addition, areas recommended for wilderness designation must be capable of being managed for wilderness over the long term. Both of these WSAs have potential ORV manageability problems and Queer Mountain has potential manageability problems associated with mining claims. Management for wilderness over the long term would be difficult and expensive. Although designation of these WSAs would undoubtedly enhance the continguous Park Service wilderness proposals, designation of the BLM areas are not crucial to maintenance of wilderness values in the Park.

2 The Proposed Plan identified a pool of land from which disposal may take place. In addition all land disposal actions are discretionary and require a land report/environmental assessment. This process would identify critical sheep habitat and water sources and provide for mitigation and/or avoidance of possible adverse impacts to the habitat.

3 The Amargosa Desert area, in which 26,880 acres are proposed for disposal, has been identified by the Nevada State Water Engineer as a designated ground water basin. This means that ground water conditions warrant special administrative attention, and each application is evaluated on its own merit. Currently, the State Water Engineer is approving no new applications for irrigation in Hydrographic Area No. 230, the Amargosa Desert. The State Water Engineer has denied over 50 applications for irrigation water; future applicatons will have little likelihood of being approved. Applications for other uses will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Office of the State Water Engineer. For these reasons effects of land disposal on water resources will be analyzed on a case-by-case basis through the land report/environmental analysis process and were not analyzed in the draft RMP/EIS. Designation or nondesignation of any of the five WSAs would have no effect on this parcel of land.

Comment Letter

4

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WESTERN REGION
450 GOLDEN GATE AVENUE, BOX 36063
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

IN REPLY REFER TO:

L7619(WR-RPE)

January 15, 1985

Memorandum

To: District Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Las Vegas, Nevada

From: ACTING Regional Director, Western Region

Subject: Esmeralda-Southern Nye Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement

5-16 1 In accordance with the State Director, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada memorandum of November 16, 1984, we have reviewed the subject document. This office has no comments on this statement. However, our Death Valley National Monument staff has also reviewed the document and has previously provided you with comments by letter of December 21, 1984. A copy of this letter is attached.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on your plan and statement.

W. Bruce Dinsmore

Enclosure

cc:
Supt., DEVA
WASO 762 w/encl.

DM	1/21/85
ADM	
PAD	
[illegible]	1/21/85
C-DEV	
[illegible]	
[illegible]	
AD CULTURE	

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 4

1 The enclosure referenced was not reproduced as it is identical to letter No. 3.

Comment Letter

5-1

STATE OF NEVADA

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

LINDA A. RYAN
Director

STATE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-4420

July 25, 1985

Edward F. Spang
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, Nevada 89520

Re: SAI NV #85300025 Project: Governor's Consistency Review, Esmeralda/ Southern Nye - RMP/FEIS

5-17

Dear Mr. Spang:

Thank you for providing the above referenced planning document for our review and comment. As you know, in February of this year, the Governor's office, in cooperation with several executive branch State agencies, presented a consensus position to the BLM on the Draft Esmeralda/Southern Nye Resource Management Plan. Our position was limited to the wilderness proposals developed for consideration by the Bureau.

Unfortunately, the Bureau is still in disagreement with the State over the Silver Peak Range Wilderness Study Area (NV-060-338). We must again reiterate our position that this area be dropped from further wilderness consideration. As stated in our consensus position, this area has significant mineral resource potential and we believe the Bureau has not fully considered all the available evidence in this matter. We also note that in Chapter 3 of the FEIS, the Bureau has included several revisions to the minerals section for the Silver Peak WSA. These changes would seem to confirm our position on mineral potentials in the area.

As you are aware, the State has also questioned the potential for management conflicts between wilderness and wild horses. The Silver Peak WSA is an important bighorn sheep habitat area. We are concerned that wilderness designation would affect wild horse

Comment Letter

5-2

Mr. Edward F. Spang
July 25, 1985
Page 2

management, which in turn would reduce bighorn sheep habitat in the area. Finally, we must remind the Bureau that Esmeralda County opposed designation of this wilderness area.

In reference to the Silver Peak WSA, it is quite clear that the Bureau's position is inconsistant with the policies and plans of the State of Nevada and the affected local government. We hope you will reconsider your position.

Sincerely,

Linda A. Ryan
Director

LAR/ll

Comment Letter

6-1

STATE OF NEVADA

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

LINDA A. RYAN
Director

STATE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-4420

February 19, 1985

Edward F. Spang
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, Nevada 89520

Re: SAI NV #85300025 Project: [redacted]
Planning Area, RMP/DEIS

5-18

Dear Mr. Spang:

The Nevada State Clearinghouse has concluded the review of the above mentioned Draft RMP/EIS. Enclosed is the Governor's Consensus Position on the wilderness portions of the Draft Plan. Also enclosed are Clearinghouse comments prepared by the Nevada Departments of Agriculture, Transportation, Wildlife, Minerals, and Conservation and Natural Resources -- Divisions of State Lands, Historic Preservation/Archeology and Forestry.

Sincerely,

John B. Walker

John B. Walker, Coordinator
State Clearinghouse, OCS/SPOC

JBW/ll
cc: Kemp Conn, BLM-Las Vegas
Commenting State Agencies
Enclosures

Comment Letter

6-2

STATE OF NEVADA

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

LINDA A. RYAN
Director

STATE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-4420

February 19, 1985

Edward F. Spang
State Director
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 12000
Reno, Nevada 89520

Re: SAI NV #85300025 Project: Governor's Consensus Position

Dear Mr. Spang:

Thank you for providing the Draft Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for our review and comment. The Resource Management Plan deals with a variety of issues and uses relating to the Bureau of Land Management lands within the planning area; however, at this time, this comment is specifically on the wilderness study areas considered in the document.

You may have already received comments from various state agencies representing their specific concerns with each area. I hope you find these helpful and informative. Because the various state agencies are given different mandates and have different concerns, their evaluations and comments may understandably vary.

The Governor has asked the various state agencies to work with the State Clearinghouse to develop a consensus position for the wilderness study areas in the Esmeralda-Southern Nye County Planning Area. These agencies were the State Departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources, Minerals, and Wildlife. The State's position is based upon information provided by the Bureau of Land Management, the State's knowledge of the resources and attributes of each area, the concerns expressed by local government officials and concerns presented by the general public.

Comment Letter

6-3

Mr. Edward F. Spa.
February 19, 1985
Page 2

The consensus developed by the state agencies, in which the Governor concurs, is as follows:

Pigeon Spring (NV-060-0350), Queer Mountain (NV-060-0354), Grapevine Mountains (NV-060-0355), and Reating Springs Range (NV-050-0460): The State supports the preferred alternative which proposes no wilderness for all four areas. These areas all lack significant wilderness attributes such as outstanding scenic quality, primitive recreational opportunities or opportunity for solitude. Two of the areas, Restling Springs Range and Pigeon Spring, in addition to lacking wilderness characteristics, are too small in size to warrant further consideration. Mineral potential in both the Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain wilderneas study areas are significant enough also to disqualify these areas.

Silver Peak Range (NV-060-338): The State feels strongly that this wilderness study area should not be recommended for further wilderness consideration. This is an area which has significant mineral resource potential. Mineral claims exist within portions of the area under consideration with active mining occurring just outside the study area boundary. A formation now being actively mined extends into the wilderness study area and is indicated on your maps as "high favorability" for metallic resources.

The Silver Peak Range is an important bighorn sheep habitat area. Concerns have been expressed regarding the incompatibility of wilderness designation with the use of the range as a wild horse management unit. Wilderness designation could seriously hamper wild horse management, in turn jeopardizing the bighorn sheep resource in the area.

We additionally note the Esmeralda County Commission opposes designation of this wildernea area.

Because of the resource conflicts, local government concerns, and limited wilderness qualities, the State urges you to drop the Silver Peak Range from further consideration as wilderness.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Linda A. Ryan
Director

LAR/11

Comment Letter

6-4

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
1100 EAST WILLIAM, SUITE 100
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89710
(702) 885-4420

TO:

__ Governor's Office	__ Labor Commission	Conservation and Natural Resources
__ Attorney General	X Legislative Counsel Bureau	
__ Administration	__ Library	
X Agriculture	__ Prisons	X State Lands
__ Commerce	__ Public Service Commission	__ Conservation Districts
__ Community Services	__ Taxation	__ Environmental Protection
__ State Job Training Office	X Transportation	X Forestry
__ Economic Development	X UNR-Bureau of Mines	X Hist. Preservation & Archeology
__ Education	X UNR-Dept. of Range, Wildlife, and Forestry	XX State Parks
__ Employment Security Department	XX Wildlife	X Water Planning
X Dept. of Minerals	__ Press Room-Capitol Building	__ Water Resources
__ Equal Rights Commission	__ Nuclear Waste Project Office	
__ Human Resources		
__ Indian Commission		

FROM: Linda A. Ryan, Director

SAI NV # 85300025 PROJECT: Esmeralda, Draft RMP/EIS

Attached for review and comment is a copy of the aforementioned project. Please evaluate it with respect to:
1) the program's effect on your plans and programs;
2) the importance of its contribution to State and/or areawide goals and objectives;
3) its accord with any applicable law, order or regulation with which you are familiar and/or
4) additional considerations.

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS NO LATER THAN 2/18/85. Write out your comments if applicable, check the appropriate box below and return the form to this office. PLEASE DO SO EVEN IF YOU HAVE NO COMMENT on this particular project so that we may complete our processing. If you are unable to comment by the prescribed date, please notify this office immediately.

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWING AGENCY:

__ No comment on this project
__ Proposal supported as written
X Additional information (see below)
__ Conference desired (see below)
__ Conditional support (outlined below)
__ Disapproval/denial of funding (must specify reason below)

Comments: (use additional sheets if necessary)

Please see attachments

Reviewer's Signature	Regional Coordinator Title	386-5256 Phone	2-5-85 Date

Comment Letter

6-5

Sometimes we tend to overlook, amongst the myriad of users of public land, the producers. Agriculture is one of the users and producers and should be acknowledged in that the management of public lands be such that it allow maximum production with minimum impact.

Therefore, the Department of Agriculture, supports alternative A, but with the following comments:

Wilderness designations bring with them certain constraints to the agriculture producer, which cause an extreme hardship. As an example, available water and its development and maintenance, is very important to the success of a grazing operation. Enclosed are Resolutions #14 and #16 (see attachments). The provisions listed should be incorporated into your use plans for all public lands in Nevada.

Your term "disposal" in regard to public lands is particularly objectionable. It is time, that when finding other uses of public lands, that the Green Belt concept be incorporated, which would allow for agriculture production, recreation and adequate floodways in our communities.

The Southern part of Nevada is facing continued growth and the possibility of a major industry (a nuclear repository) being developed. Establishing utility corridors now is prudent. However, this development should include the promulgation of liability responsibilities to corridor users (see Resolution #6). The additional roads and railroads should be constructed for maximum safety to the public and agricultural producers. For example, railroad bridges instead of crossings, fences where appropriate, etc.

In lieu of present trends in the reduction of Federal programs and services, is there an assurance that intensive management can be achieved with the necessary monitoring of the range to insure proper utilization? What base line data is available on these areas? How complete are these studies. Where can they be reviewed by the Department (also see Resolution #12).

Management of wild horse and burro populations presents, at times, an emotional reaction from concerned parties. The Department supports the free market concept with use of excess production resulting in sustained and predictable production (see Resolution #15).

Comment Letter

6-6

It has been my experience that agriculture producers are willing to compromise use patterns in favor of big game and wildlife habitat requirements. Local CRMP committees have delineated grazing strategies and the curtailment of certain kinds of livestock in order to better the range for all concerned. Range trades, etc., should be considered for the reintroduction of sensitive species.

Ash Meadows is one of the most biologically important and unique in Southern Nevada. Continued management practices should be limited to biological controls and this site would be a good location for a research station for all monitoring activities and environmental assessments of the public lands in Southern Nevada.

A positive and constructive approach to the use of public lands is possible with communication and arbitration. Let's maintain the "American Dream" in agriculture and, in particular, in Nevada agriculture.

Attachments:

Resolutions #6, 12, 14, 15 and 16, adopted at the Joint Convention of the NV Cattlemen's Association and NV Wool Growers Association, in Winnemucca, NV on November 14, 1984.

Comment Letter

6-7

STATE CLEARINGHOUSE

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
1100 EAST WILLIAM, SUITE 109
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89710
(702) 885-4420

TO:

__ Governor's Office	__ Labor Commission	
__ Attorney General	X Legislative Counsel Bureau	Conservation and Natural Resources
__ Administration	__ Library	
X Agriculture	__ Prisons	X State Lands
__ Commerce	__ Public Service Commission	__ Conservation Districts
__ Community Services	__ Taxation	__ Environmental Protection
__ State Job Training Office	X Transportation	X Forestry
__ Economic Development	X UNR-Bureau of Mines	X Hist. Preservation & Archeology
__ Education	X UNR-Dept. of Range, Wildlife, and Forestry	XX State Parks
__ Employment Security Department	XX Wildlife	X Water Planning
X Dept. of Minerals	__ Press Room-Capitol Building	__ Water Resources
__ Equal Rights Commission	__ Nuclear Waste Project Office	
__ Human Resources		
__ Indian Commission		

FROM: Linda A. Ryan, Director

SAI NV # 85300025 PROJECT: Esmeralda DEIS, Wilderness Technical Report

Attached for review and comment is a copy of the aforementioned project. Please evaluate it with respect to:

1) the program's effect on your plans and programs;
2) the importance of its contribution to State and/or statewide goals and objectives;
3) its accord with any applicable law, order or regulation with which you are familiar and/or
4) additional considerations.

PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR COMMENTS NO LATER THAN 2/26/85. Write out your comments if applicable, check the appropriate box below and return the form to this office. PLEASE DO SO EVEN IF YOU HAVE NO COMMENT on this particular project so that we may complete our processing. If you are unable to comment by the prescribed date, please notify this office immediately.

THIS SECTION TO BE COMPLETED BY REVIEWING AGENCY:

__ No comment on this project	__ Conference desired (see below)
__ Proposal supported as written	__ Conditional support (outlined below)
X Additional information (see below)	__ Disapproved/denial of funding (must specify reason below)

Comments: (use additional sheets if necessary)

Attached: Resolution No. 14 issued by NV Cattlemen's Assoc. and NV Wool Growers Assoc. at their Joint Convention November 14, 1984.

The NV Dept. of Agriculture supports resolution No. 14 and encourages the consideration and incorporation of the specific points of the resolution into your Wilderness Area Plans.

Thomas E. Smith	Regional Coordinator	386-5256	2-4-85
Reviewer's Signature	Title	Phone	Date

5-121

Comment Letter

6-8

RESOLUTION NO. 14
NvCA Publi ands and Forest

NEVADA CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION AND
NEVADA WOOL GROWERS ASSOCIATION
JOINT CONVENTION
Winnemucca, Nevada
November 14, 1984

WHEREAS, the Nevada Cattlemen's and Ne wda Wool Growers Associations support the concept of a limited amount of wilderness, however be it

RESOLVED: That the Nevada Cattlemen's and Nevada Wool Growers Associations do not support future wilderness areas until such language is developed that includes, but is not limited to:

1. Recognition of state water rights
2. Establishment of the use of pesticides and herbicides as management tools
3. Provision for the release of lands for strategic mineral development
4. Provision for the use of traditional predatory animal control methods
5. Authorization for the timely use of motorized-mechanized equipment for such use as livestock management, range development, fence maintenance and predator control
6. No allowance for Buffer Zones around the wilderness areas
7. Provision for increased grazing whenever range conditions allow

Directed to: Nevada Congressional Delegation
Secretary of Interior
Secretary of Agriculture
National Cattlemen's Association
National Wool Growers Association
Nevada Legislative Council
Governor Richard Bryan

Comment Letter

6-9

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
1263 SOUTH STEWART STREET
CARSON CITY, NEVADA 89712

TRANSPORTATION BOARD
RICHARD H. BRYAN, Governor, Chairman
BRIAN McKAY, Attorney General
DARREL R. DAINES, State Controller

A. E. STONE
Director

December 6, 1984

IN REPLY REFER TO

PSD 7.19

John Walker, Senior Planner
State Clearinghouse Review
Office of Community Services
1100 East William Street, Suite 109
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Dear John:

The Nevada Department of Transportation has reviewed the scoping document for SAI NV 85300025 - Esmeralda Draft RMP/EIS w/ Wilderness Technical Report.

The Grapevine Mountain Wilderness study area currently contains four material sites (the report states only two) within its boundaries. These sites (identified as: NEV-004469/NM-004472/A-2386/NEV-004470) have been deemed essential to the Department by our Right-Of-Way and Materials and Testing Divisions. Lack of similar sites in the area requires that the Department retain said lands.

6-1-22

Therefore, we recommend that the Bureau of Land Management alter the west boundary of the Grapevine Mountain WSA to exclude the sites or proceed with the no action alternative in respect to this WSA.

1

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project.

Sincerely,

DENNIS O. BARRY
Assistant Director
Planning

DOB:JM4:bb

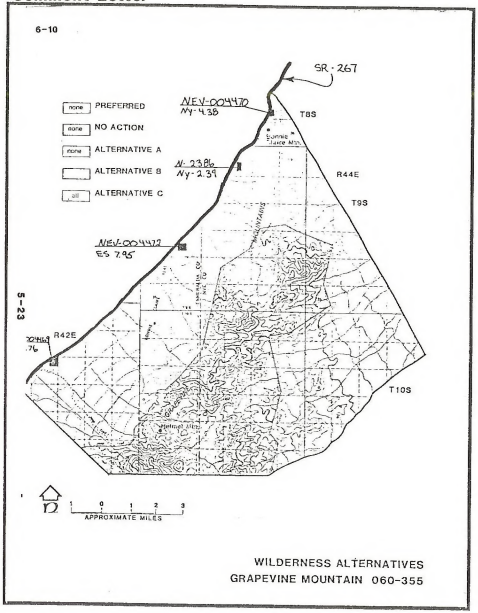
Attachment

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 6

1 The No Action Alternative is the Proposed Action in respect to wilderness for the Grapevine Mountains WSA.

Comment Letter



5-23

Comment Letter

6-11

RECEIVED ON
FEB 08 1985
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE
1100 Valley Road
P.O. Box 10678
Reno, Nevada 89520-0022
(702) 789-0500

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

WILLIAM A. MOLINI
Director

February 5, 1985

Ms. Linda A. Ryan, Director
Office of Community Services
State Clearinghouse
1100 East William, Suite 109
Carson City, NV 89710

Dear Linda:

5-24

We appreciate the opportunity to review and provide comment on the Esmeralda DEIS and associated Wilderness Technical Report (SAI NV #85300025) which was prepared by the Las Vegas District of the Bureau of Land Management.

As mentioned in previous correspondence during earlier phases of the planning process, our agency believes that recreational values within the study area should receive high priority consideration. Although Esmeralda County does not represent a large fish and wildlife resource base, it does provide a major potential in the development of recreational values for southwestern Nevada. Based upon our agency's input report to the BLM in October of 1983 and using the USFS figure of $17.85 per user day, for example, the fisheries resource of Esmeralda County was worth some $70,703 in 1982 alone.

2 Our agency supports the proposed action for the Grapevine, Pigeon Spring, Queer Mountain, and Resting Spring WSA's since these areas do not contain high wilderness values and would best be managed under existing multiple use oriented mandates. Our agency does not agree with the proposed action for the Silver Peak Range even though the described area does have some significant wilderness values. It is our belief that wilderness designation is not compatible with management strategies proposed for wild horse use in the area. We would suggest that the area be managed under the principles of multiple use management with emphasis on improvements for the bighorn sheep resource. Proper planning should include reduction of wild horse numbers in addition to development and/or maintenance of primary water sources.

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 6

2 The BLM considers wilderness designation compatible with multiple use management. Wilderness designation will not preclude management of wild horses. The Silver Peak Range is one of our priority areas with an AMP already completed. In addition, the Proposed Plan identified the Silver Peak Area as first priority for AMP and HMAP development and implementation. These documents will be well coordinated and will identify specific management actions to improve habitat.

Comment Letter

6-12

Ms. Linda A. Ryan
February 5, 1985
Page 2

One major concern associated with the proposed action in the RMP relates to the emphasis on wild horse management, particularly in those areas where potential and documented wildlife conflicts occur. Because of the classification of bighorn sheep as a sensitive species, and because desert sheep are limited by habitat requirements, we would suggest that the Silver Peak Range, Lone Mountain, and Stonewall Mountain be protected from wild horse use in the interest of the bighorn sheep resource. Stated very simply, wild horses can survive throughout most of Esmeralda County, whereas bighorn sheep are extremely limited to specific areas. Conflicts between wild horses and bighorn sheep on the Silver Peak Range were first identified in an approved habitat management plan in 1970.

Our agency also has a concern with the proposal to initiate grazing in the vicinity of Emigrant Peak since this area has been closed to grazing for a considerable number of years. Again, with reference to the approved RMP, this area was recommended for nonuse, a management decision we continue to support.

As noted on page 57 of the draft document, approximately 70 percent of the RMP area is grazed yearlong, a practice which is not in the best interest of the basic land resources. We would suggest that implementation of some type of grazing system be a high priority in the planning process in order to protect soils, watershed, natural vegetation, and other important resources. The same comments would also apply for riparian protection which, according to comments found on page 46, are also overgrazed. Riparian areas are particularly important in Esmeralda County since the scarcity of such zones increases their importance for wildlife.

While our agency certainly supports the land disposal program as related to needs for community expansion and/or agricultural development, we question whether ample water is currently available for further development of the parcels proposed for disposal in the Pahrump Valley area. We would, therefore suggest that the land disposal program take into careful consideration water availability.

If you have any questions on the above or feel a need for further input at this time, please advise.

Sincerely,

Willie

William A. Molini
Director

RPM:pw

cc: Region III

Comment Letter

6-13

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

RICHARD L. REYBURN
Director

DEPARTMENT OF MINERALS
400 W. King Street, Suite 106
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-5050

February 7, 1985

KEMP CONN
Las Vegas District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P O Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

The Department of Minerals appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Esmeralda Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, SAI NV #85300025.

The Department of Minerals supports the BLM's preferred alternative for the Grapevine Mountain, Pigeon Spring, Queer Mountain and Resting Springs WSA's which are recommended as nonsuitable for wilderness designation. For the Silver Peak Range WSA, however, the Department of Minerals strongly recommends the "no action" alternative.

Mineral potential for each WSA is described as follows:

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS

WSA NV# 060-0355

This area concerns 66,800 acres along the Nevada-California border in southern Esmeralda and Nye Counties.

Most of the WSA is covered with Tertiary volcanics; rhyolites, dacites, andesites, and the Timber Mountain tuff. Pre-cambrian and Paleozoic sediments intruded by Jurassic quartz monzonite are believed to underlie the volcanics. Quaternary alluvium covers the valley portions of the WSA. The older sediments have the most potential for hosting mineral deposits, particularly along the intrusive contact. Some of these older sediments may be exposed by faulting in the southwestern part of the WSA.

The closest mineral producing area is eight miles northwest of the WSA in the Gold Mountain District. About $4,000 in gold was produced there. There are no known patented claims in the WSA, the nearest ones being in the Gold Mountain District. In the southwestern part of the WSA are 41 acres of pre-FLPMA claims and 1,154 acres of post-FLPMA claims.

Sand and gravel deposits have been used by the state Highway Department at two sites. There are no known uranium deposits, or oil and gas deposits. There are no known geothermal deposits; however, the deep seated faults in the southwestern part of the WSA indicate a moderate potential for geothermal development.

Comment Letter

6-14

PIGEON SPRING

WSA NV# 050-0350

This area concerns 3,575 acres along the Nevada-California border about 30 miles southeast of Dyer in Esmeralda County.

The oldest rocks in the WSA are a series of conformable sedimentary formations ranging from late Pre-Cambrian to Ordovician. The oldest unit is the Wyman Formation, a hornfelsed siltstone with thin limestone interbeds. Overlying the Wyman is the Reed Dolomite, a potential host for talc deposits. These Pre-Cambrian and Paleozoic sediments have been intruded by the Jurassic Sylvania pluton, a large body of quartz monzonite. A band of Tertiary olivine basalt overlies the sediments and intrusive. A narrow band of Quaternary alluvium is found in the south and east edges of the WSA.

Just north of the WSA is the Sylvania mine and several prospects. The Sylvania mine has produced lead-silver from deposits at the contact between the Wyman Formation and the Jurassic intrusive. Various washes, especially the one that runs due north through sections 19,18 and 7, T. 6 S., R. 39 E., have been placered, indicating the possibility of a gold source in the Wyman Formation in the WSA.

The Les Brown molybdenun prospect is in the southwest part of the WSA. East of the WSA is the Cucomungo molybdenum prospect.

More than 200,000 tons of talc have been produced from the Sylvania and Palmetto districts north of the WSA. The Amry fluorite prospect is about one mile east of the WSA.

There are patented claims north of the WSA in the Sylvania district and south of the WSA in California. Numerous unpatented placer claims surround the WSA and some extend into the northeast corner of the WSA.

There are no known uranium, thorium, oil or gas deposits in or near the WSA. There are no known geothermal deposits in the WSA; however, deep seated normal faults and the presence of young volcanics indicate a possible environment for geothermal resources.

QUEER MOUNTAIN

WSA NV# 060-0354

This area concerns 81,550 acres along the Nevada-California border in southern Esmeralda County.

Pre-cambrian and Paleozoic sediments, intruded by Jurassic quartz monzonite are exposed in the northwestern portion of the WSA. The rest of the WSA is covered with Tertiary volcanics or Quaternary alluvium. The oldest rock unit in the WSA is the Wyman Formation, which is mostly siltstone with some interbeds of limestone. The Wyman is overlain by the Reed Dolomite which is exposed northeast of the WSA by Gold Mountain. The Jurassic intrusive (Sylvania pluton) is widely exposed in the northern half of the WSA. Mineralization in the area is thought to be related to this period of intrusions. The Tertiary rocks are mainly rhyolite flows with some dacite and andesite. Overlying these is the Pliocene Timber Mountain Tuff which covers a great deal of the WSA.

In the north central part of the WSA is the southern part of the Gold Mountain or Tokop District. Gold veins occur here in the intrusive rocks next to the metamorphosed Pre-cambrian sediments. The Gold Mountain District has a recorded production of $4,000 in gold as well as a small quantity of tungsten. Six miles north of Gold Mountain is the Hornsilver (Gold Point) District which probably produced about $1 million in gold and silver (about $10 million at modern prices).

Comment Letter

Queer Mountain Continued

6-15

In the north central part of the WSA are several prospects and one shaft which indicate mineral potential. Near the northwest point of the WSA are several silver prospects around which the WSA boundary was apparently drawn to exclude them from the WSA. No other prospects are known within the WSA; however, small mines and prospects are found to the north where Paleozoic sediments and Jurassic intrusives are exposed.

There are patented claims in the Gold Mountain District, some very close to the WSA. There are many unpatented claims in the area, with one group extending southward a few miles into the northern part of the WSA. Near the eastern point of the WSA are a couple of claims very close to the WSA boundary.

There are no known nonmetallic mineral deposits in or near the WSA. There are no known uranium or thorium deposits in the WSA, but some radioactive occurrences exist in the Wyman Formation or intrusive rocks in and near the northern boundary of the WSA.

There are no known oil or gas deposits, exploration wells, or federal oil and gas leases in or near the WSA. There are no known geothermal deposits in the WSA; however, the whole area has a moderate potential for geothermal development.

RESTING SPRINGS RANGE

WSA NV# 050-0460

This area concerns 3,850 acres along the California-Nevada border, 10 miles west of Pahrump in Nye County.

The oldest exposed rock is the Pre-Cambrian Stirling Quartzite. Overlying this is the Lower Cambrian Wood Canyon Formation: quartzitic sandstone, siltstone, micaceous shale and marble. Next is a series of interbedded limestones and shales with some dolomite extending through Devonian time. During the Miocene, tuffaceous lake beds with conglomerate, sandstone, siltstone, ash fall and ash flow tuffs were deposited. Unconformably overlying this are Pliocene (?) Pleistocene (?) fanglomerates and Quaternary alluvium.

There are no known mineral deposits, prospects, or occurrences within the WSA. There are no known patented or unpatented claims within the WSA. The geology, however, is somewhat favorable for gold occurrences. In several districts of southern Nye County, gold is disseminated in dolomite beds within the Stirling Quartzite. In the Johnnie District (15 miles northeast of the WSA) gold bearing veins are in the Zabriske Quartzite and underlying dolomite beds near the top of the Wood Canyon Formation. Both the Stirling Quartzite and Wood Canyon Formation are in the WSA.

Zeolites are mined by Anaconda a short distance north of the WSA in Miocene tuffaceous lake beds similar to those found in the WSA.

There are no known uranium or thorium deposits, prospects or claims in or near the WSA. No oil and gas deposits, seeps or exploration wells are known to be present. There are a few oil and gas leases in the valley areas around the WSA but not in it. There are no known geothermal deposits within the WSA, but there is a narrow belt of low temperature wells and springs north of the WSA.

Comment Letter

6-16

SILVER PEAK

WSA NV# 050-0338

This area concerns 33,900 acres west of Silver Peak in Esmeralda County, Nevada. It covers most of the Silver Peak Range.

The WSA is surrounded by three mining districts: the Red Mountain District, the Mineral Ridge District to the northeast and the Dyer District to the west. The Red Mountain District and Mineral Ridge District are especially rich in silver and associated gold mineralization.

The oldest rock exposed is the Pre-Cambrian - Cambrian Campito formation, a massive quartzite. This is followed by the Poleta (carbonate) formation,the Harkless (siltstone) formation, the Mule Spring Limestone, the Emigrant (claystone) formation and the Ordovician Palmetto formation which consists of black shale with chert, limestone and quartzite. Although not exposed in the WSA, the Pre-Cambrian Wyman formation, a siltstone with limestone interbeds, undoubtedly underlies at least the north central and northwest parts of the WSA.

A period of Tertiary volcanism deposited a series of porphyritic latites, rhyolitic flows, domes, breccias, airfall tuffs and intrusive masses. Near the end of this period of volcanism, the magma chamber collapsed to form the Silver Peak caldera, which is about four miles wide and eight miles long. Fluids released after volcanism ceased deposited the silver-bearing quartz veins of the Red Mountain district, and there are indications that similar mineralization is very close to the WSA or even within it.

Previous mineral production has come mainly from the Mineral Ridge and Red Mountain districts, immediately northeast of the WSA. The Mineral Ridge district produced about $13 million in gold during the 1860s, 1870s and 1930s which would be worth about $200 million at modern prices. The Red Mountain district produced about $3 million in the late 1930s which would be worth about $30 million at modern prices. There are records of three major productive mines in the area: the 16-to-1, the Mohawk and the Nivloc. Several other small mines and prospects exist in the area as well. The 16-to-1 mine, currently operating, has reserves of 1.1 million tons grading at 0.035 ounces gold/ton and eight ounces silver/ton according to published reports. The Mohawk mine has seven targets possibly containing 150,000 tons of ore, according to Yeta Grande. The Nivloc mine produced nearly $4 million in silver between 1937 and 1943. The Dyer district, on the western edge of the WSA, has produced $13,000 mainly in silver. Borates were mined in the late 1800s in the marshes of Fish Lake Valley just north of the WSA.

There are many prospects surrounding the WSA and some within the WSA boundary. Those within the WSA boundary include the prospects along the western edge associated with the Dyer district, and one prospect in the southwest corner of the WSA.

Two areas within the WSA have metallic mineral potential. One is an argillized, intensely bleached and iron stained area about two miles wide and five to six miles long with numerous northeast striking erosion resistant ribs. Some of these ribs have geochemically anomalous values which are considered to be indicators of precious metal mineralization. The ribs have been interpreted as the upper parts of epithermal vein systems above potential ore bearing zones. The other area, roughly in the center of the WSA, has an uncharacteristic pink color on aerial photos and has been mapped by Stewart and others (1974) as the Cambrian Harkless (?) formation. The pink coloration and uncertainty of formation identification indicates

Comment Letter

6-17

alteration, which suggests mineral potential. The Wyman formation, host for mineralization in the adjacent Red Mountain district, crops out in several areas in Esmeralda County. Although the Wyman formation is not exposed in the WSA, it could exist beneath the Tertiary volcanic cover.

There are no known patented claims in the WSA, but several unpatented claims exist. Most of these cover the altered zone northwest of the Red Mountain district. Other claims cover the prospects mentioned earlier.

There are no known uranium or thorium deposits within the WSA. Some radioactive occurrences exist north and east of the WSA.

There are no known oil or gas deposits within the WSA; however, there are two sections under lease for oil and gas. One is in Fish Lake Valley and the other is at the Nevada Oil and Minerals well site. There are no known geothermal deposits within the WSA; however, thermal water has been encountered in Fish Lake Valley, east of the WSA.

Before any final decision is reached regarding the use of this land, the resistant ribs in the northeast part of the WSA should be examined closely and sampled, the possibly altered exposures in the central portion of the WSA should be examined and perhaps sampled and the prospects on the west edge of the WSA should be examined to see if the mineralization and/or alteration extends further into the WSA.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to respond to this matter. As we receive more information on these areas, we will keep the appropriate agencies informed.

Sincerely,

Doug Driesner

Doug Driesner
Resource Engineer

DD:wf

Comment Letter

6-18

February 7, 1985

Kemp Conn, District Manager
Las Vegas District
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Kemp:

Our review of the Draft Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement indicates that the preferred alternative appears to be an acceptable alternative for the Bureau's land management programs. The preferred alternative seems to be beneficial for most interests and should satisfy most of the concerns that have been raised.

5-128

This support for the preferred alternative, however, does not extend to wilderness considerations. Our position on wilderness will be developed with other state agencies and included in the Governor's recommendation. The position may, or may not, be consistent with the wilderness proposal contained in the preferred alternative. You should be aware that designation of wilderness areas in Esmeralda County is strongly opposed by local government as expressed in a resolution by the County Commissioners and through various hearings and federal land management workshops.

The preferred alternative also appears to be the best alternative presented for wildlife and livestock use. We would prefer to see a reduction in wild horse and burro populations where impacts are significant prior to monitoring confirmation; however, we feel the proposal for later adjustments, where needed, to be satisfactory.

Land disposal potentials contained in the preferred alternative, while not as large as those proposed in other alternatives and perhaps not as extensive as those proposed by local governments, appear to be a good beginning toward proper adjustment of the land tenure problem. Land disposals, where resource conflicts have been eliminated or are not significant, are appropriate and should be implemented with close coordination with state and local governments.

Sincerely,

Mike Del Grosso
Land Use Planner

bd

State Clearinghouse

Comment Letter

"BAYO" ESTERGARD, *Director*
Dept. Conservation and Natural Resources

LON ELL V. "LONE" SMITH
State Forester Firewarden

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

ROBERT E. POLING, II
Southern Area Forester

Address Reply to
4747 W. Vegas Drive
State Mail Room Complex
Las Vegas, Nevada 89115

RECEIVED ON
FEB 05 1985
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF FORESTRY

MEMORANDUM

February 4, 1985

TO: Bob Poling,
Southern Area Forester

FROM: John Jones, Resource Mgt. Officer,
Southern Area

SUBJECT: Esmeralda - Southern Nye Draft RMP/EIS

After reading the Wilderness Technical Report for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Draft Range Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement published by BLM, I have these comments on its contents. The report examines several proposed wilderness areas in detail with respect to their suitability for designation as wilderness. The only area included in the Preferred Alternative of the RMP is the Silver Peak Range. I agree with this selection and the proposed boundaries in the Preferred Alternative, although the Technical Report suggests expansion of the boundaries rather than reduction. I feel that the Preferred Alternatives designation is more sensible because it excludes the portions of high metallic mineral favorability and existing mining claims while retaining the areas of most desirable wilderness value.

I have no other comments on either document aside from those made to you earlier. Attached are the face sheets that came with each copy noting the response deadline as February 6, 1985.

JJ:pe

Comment Letter

6-20

RICHARD H. BRYAN
Governor

STATE OF NEVADA

ROLAND D. WESTERGARD
State Historic Preservation Officer

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND ARCHEOLOGY
201 S. Fall Street
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710
(702) 885-5138

February 12, 1985

MEMORANDUM

TO: John Walker, Office of Community Services

FROM: Alice M. Becker, Staff Archeologist

SUBJECT: ESMERALDA - SOUTHERN NYE PLANNING AREA DRAFT RMP AND EIS.
SAI NV #85300025

6-20

The Division has reviewed the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area draft RMP and EIS prepared by the BLM. Although significant historic properties are protected by Federal preservation law (the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and Executive Order 11593), our office would have preferred that specific cultural resource issues be addressed. The planning area has not been extensively examined; however, we do know of the existence of several important cultural resources. Ash Meadows was the location of intense prehistoric activity and is now the focus of efforts to preserve threatened and endangered plant and animal species. Both issues need to be considered in the management of this area. Historic mining towns such as Gold Point and Rhyolite have mixed ownership and real potential for management problems in the future. These situations should be addressed in the plan rather than waiting for crises to arise.

If you have any questions regarding these comments, please call us. We would be happy to discuss the issues with the BLM.

AMB/de

Comment Letter

7

Division of State Lands
State Land Office
State Land Use Planning Agency
(702) 885-4165

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Address Reply to
Division of State Lands
201 S. Fall Street
Capitol Complex
Carson City, Nevada 89710

Division of State Lands
February 7, 1985

Kemp Conn, District Manager
Las Vegas District
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Kemp:

Our review of the Draft Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement indicates that the preferred alternative appears to be an acceptable alternative for the Bureau's land management programs. The preferred alternative seems to be beneficial for most interests and should satisfy most of the concerns that have been raised.

This support for the preferred alternative, however, does not extend to wilderness considerations. Our position on wilderness will be developed with other state agencies and included in the Governor's recommendation. The position may, or may not, be consistent with the wilderness proposal contained in the preferred alternative. You should be aware that designation of wilderness areas in Esmeralda County is strongly opposed by local government as expressed in a resolution by the County Commissioners and through various hearings and federal land management workshops.

The preferred alternative also appears to be the best alternative presented for wildlife and livestock use. We would prefer to see a reduction in wild horse and burro populations where impacts are significant prior to monitoring confirmation; however, we feel the proposal for later adjustments, where needed, to be satisfactory.

Land disposal potentials contained in the preferred alternative, while not as large as those proposed in other alternatives and perhaps not as extensive as those proposed by local governments, appear to be a good beginning toward proper adjustment of the land tenure problem. Land disposals, where resource conflicts have been eliminated or are not significant, are appropriate and should be implemented with close coordination with state and local governments.

Sincerely,

Mike Del Grosso
Land Use Planner

JMD:jsd

cc: State Clearinghouse

Comment Letter

8

P.O. Box 27999
2021 North Western Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90027
Telephone 213 856-7600

The John F. Kennedy Center
for the Performing Arts
Washington, D.C. 20566
Telephone 202 833-4000

The American Film Institute

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

2/19/85

Dear Mr. Conn,

I wanted to make some comments on wilderness proposals within your district. I believe that Grapevine Mountains, Queer Mountain and the Silver Peak Range all clearly qualify for wilderness designation.

The Grapevine Mountains and Queer Mountain wilderness study areas are logical extensions of the Death Valley area and should thus be protected.

None of the three areas have significant resource conflicts - wilderness is the best use for than. Grapevine is virtually untouched by man, it offers exceptional opportunities for solitude. Queer too is wild and untouched. As for the Silver Peak Range, along with its spectacular scenery and high quality wilderness is its importance to large herds of bighorn sheep and wild horses. The maximum acreage here should be designated as wilderness (35,000 acres).

I appreciate the opportunity to make comments. Thanks for your time.

Sincerely,

Thomas Bliss
Sony Video Center

Comment Letter

9

AtlanticRichfieldCompany

Public Affairs
555 Seventeenth Street
Denver, Colorado 80202
Telephone 303 293 7578

C.M. Moseley
Representative
Rocky Mountain Region

December 31, 1984

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Battle Mountain District
Bureau of Land Management
P. O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye Resource Area -Nevada
Draft RMP and DEIS

Dear Mr. Conn:

Atlantic Richfield Company appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Draft Resource Management Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Resource Area in Nevada.

We support the adoption of the Preferred Alternative in that it recommends a nonwilderness designation for the Resting Springs Wilderness Study Area. As you are aware, Anaconda Minerals Company, a Division of Atlantic Richfield Company, has claims adjacent to the Resting Springs Area. We are, therefore, interested in having the area remain open for possible future mineral exploration. We also support the nonwilderness recommendations for Grapevine Mountains, Pigeon Spring, and Queer Mountain. The concept of eliminating mineralized acreage from the Silver Peak Range in order to avoid potential conflicts with claimants is also supported. Further, it is important that minerals play an active role in wilderness decisions. It is encouraging to find that the BLM has indeed taken these resource values into consideration during the wilderness study process and has made its decision accordingly.

Again, we appreciate this opportunity to comment. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

C. M. Moseley

C. M. Moseley

CMM/ko

Comment Letter

10-1

Defenders
OF WILDLIFE

February 16, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Las Vegas District
U.S. Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

Defenders of Wildlife submits this letter as our comments and recommendations on your Esmeralda-South Nye Resource Management Plan.

We are greatly disappointed that no Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are designated in this plan. We recommend the designation of appropriate areas as ACECs. For example, BLM lands adjoining the new Ash Meadows National Wildlife Refuge should be designated an ACEC to ensure compatible management practices and comprehensive watershed protection. As you know, Ash Meadows contains at least 29 endemic species. Several endangered species occur there, along with many additional candidate species. Indeed, Ash Meadows is a rare natural treasure of international significance. BLM has a solemn responsibility under the Endangered Species Act, NEPA, FLPMA, and other laws to exercise management discretion in a manner which not only guarantees full protection for listed species, but also enhances their recovery. Again, we believe an ACEC is reasonable and fully justified for Ash Meadows.

In addition, we recommend an ACEC for "big dune," the high sand dune near Lathrop Wells. This pristine and unique area may have at least nine endemic invertebrates. Unfortunately, we are informed that possible off-road vehicle activities may jeopardize fragile natural values. We oppose ORV use on "big dune," and believe an ACEC is necessary. Similarly, we support an ACEC designation for the "Death Valley Overlook." This area has important scenic and natural values. Other areas worthy of ACEC investigation are the Monte Cristo Malpais scenic area near Coaldale, Lone Peak, and Crescent Dunes.

CALIFORNIA OFFICE: 5604 ROSEDALE WAY, SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA 95822 • (916) 442-6386
NATIONAL OFFICE: 1244 NINETEENTH STREET, NW • WASHINGTON, DC 20036 • (202) 659-9510

Comment Letter

10-2

Defenders of Wildlife is disappointed that BLM recommends only one of the five Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) for wilderness designation. We believe that substantial additional WSA acreage should be recommended for wilderness protection. For example, in the Silver Peak Range (060-0338), we support 33,900 acres for wilderness under a slight improvement of "Alternative B." This WSA has numerous springs and critically important riparian habitat. It also possesses significant wildlife values, including bighorn sheep and rare spotted bat.

For the Grapevine Mountains (060-0355), we recommend at least 33,000 acres for wilderness. Protection of this area would benefit bighorn sheep habitat and rare flora, as well as being a scenic adjunct for Death Valley National Monument.

For Queer Mountain (060-0354), we support a modification of Alternative "C" of 60,000 acres to protect primitive bajadas and Joshua tree forests.

We hope that BLM will recommend the designation of the above ACECs and increase the recommended acreage for wilderness protection as outlined in this letter.

Thank you very much for considering our views.

Sincerely,

Richard Spotts
/js

Richard Spotts
California Representative
Defenders of Wildlife

RS/js

cc: Interested parties.

Comment Letter

11

INSPIRATION MINES, INCORPORATED

P.O. BOX 1559 CLAYPOOL, ARIZONA 85532

A Subsidiary of Inspiration Resources Corporation

February 4, 1985

U. S. Bureau of Land Management
4765 W. Vegas Drive
P. O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Attention: Mr. Joseph V. H. Ross

To Whom It May Concern:

In reference to Wilderness Study Area NV-060-0338, "Silver Peak Range", as designated in BLM "Esmeralda-Southern Nye Wilderness Technical Report", of November 1984, this is to advise you that Inspiration Mines Inc. objects to this area being seriously considered for wilderness. Inspiration has an operating mine two miles east of the eastern boundary of WSA NV-060-0338. Quartz veins in this district which carry economic gold and silver are in a mineralized belt about six miles wide in a northwest-southeast direction.

5-92

The mineralized veins trend in a general northeast-southwest direction. From the known mines, two miles east of WSA NV-060-0338, most of the local faults in this district trend in a southwest direction for roughly eight miles which is right across the southeast side of the WSA. Economic mineralization is often associated with these faults.

The general geological environment on a large portion of the southeast side of this WSA is quite similar to the geologic environment where the local mines are. Because of that, there may be good chances of finding additional ore deposits in the WSA area.

Please refer to Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology Bulletin 78, "Geology and Mineral Deposits of Esmeralda County, Nevada" for data and maps relating to the area.

I urge you to disqualify WSA NV-060-0338 as a wilderness area.

Sincerely,

H. W. Olmstead
Chief Exploration Geologist

HWO:sk

Comment Letter

12

NEVADA WILDLIFE FEDERATION, INC.

An Affiliate of the National Wildlife Federation

820 EAST SAHARA AVENUE / LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89104

January 20, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, Dist. Mgr.
Bur. Land Manag.
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nv. 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

After studying the Draft EIS for the Esmeralda- S. Nye Planning Area, we wish to go on record as supporting your Preferred Alternative. From a wildlife standpoint, there is real need for water development. There is need to reduce horse and burro numbers to ease competition with cattle and native wildlife, vegetative manipulations should be done, and we would like to see sagegrouse reintroduced into historic range.

We are in full agreement that the Grapevine Mtns., Pigeon Sprs., Queer Mtn., and the Resting Spr. Range do not qualify for wilderness designation. While the Silver Peak Range has some merit as a wilderness, it will hardly qualify as one of the crown jewels of the wilderness system. We offer no objection to your recommendation per the preferred alternative.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We hope our support will be of some help in determining future management directions.

Sincerely yours,

John A. Leitch, DDS
President

cc: Fred Wright

CONSERVE OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

Comment Letter

13-1

PRODUCTION EXPLORATION RESOURCES

Edward M. Tomany P. O. Box 452 Tonopah, Nevada 89049 702-482-3973

January 16, 1985

Bureau of Land Management
Project Manager Mr. Kemp Conn
Post Office Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Subject: Draft-Resource Management Plan, and Environmental Impact Statement for Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area, Nevada

Dear Mr. Conn:

My name is Edward M. Tomany. I own and operate a private geologic and mining consulting company, the present address of which is: P.O. Box 452, Tonopah, Nevada, 89049; telephone (702) 482-3973. I have several comments to make concerning the Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

Comment # 1 -

On page 41, Chapter 3, AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT, I quote, "There is a constant attrition of these resources as surface disturbing activities relating to mining, ranching, farming, and the like take their toll. Some extremely important sites are being destroyed or extensively damaged with little regard to cultural values."

1 This statement goes beyond suggestion that the environment is being damaged. Specifically, it states damage is, and has been, and continues to be done in the study area. I request you produce the data showing specific damages and identify the parties responsible. It appears to me that the manner in which you have stated this fact, might well be lacking true detail and fact. If so, I request you retract and remove the statement from the report.

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Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 13

1 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

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Comment # 2 -

2 Public Law 94-579, 94th Congress, October 21st, 1976, Title VI - Designated Management Areas, Section 603, Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study, sets forth the policy and guidelines for wilderness study and identification. Section 603 does not dictate the requirement that each State of the United States is responsible to provide a wilderness or any portion of wilderness to satisfy the regulation. For the fact, Public Law 94-579, 94th Congress, October 21st, 1976 (F.L.P. M. Act of 1976) Section 101 through Section 707 sets no state requirement to provide wilderness or any portion of wilderness for consideration for withdrawal.

On page 65 of the Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, I quote your conclusion under the diversity criteria, "The State of Nevada is underrepresented in the NWPS with only one designated area, the Jarbridge Wilderness, on the Oregon border."

3 The Bureau of Land Management, Department of the Interior has no right or authority to make this statement. Further, this report is not required to report or represent any information other than fact gathered and under authority prescribed by Public Law 94-579. The inclusion of this statement is outside of any authority granted to the Bureau of Land Management; further, it is defamatory to the State of Nevada and the residents of the State of Nevada. I request you remove this statement from the report.

Comment # 3 -

I would like to address the basic facts concerning the mineral potential of the five proposed wilderness study areas in the Esmeralda - Southern Nye Study. On page 151, Alternative C, Social Values, I quote, " However, since no detailed minerals inventory exists for each of the five WSA's,"; I suggest that the minerals inventory is invalid. To proceed any further in wilderness consideration is in violation of the authority granted

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Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 13

2 Public Law 94-579, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, Section 603, mandates that "within fifteen years after the date of approval of this Act, the Secretary shall review those roadless areas of five thousand acres or more and roadless islands of the public lands, identified during the inventory required by section 201(a) of this Act as having wilderness characteristics described in the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (78 Stat. 890; 16 U.S.C. 1131 et seq.) and shall from time to time report to the President his recommendation as to the suitability or nonsuitability of each such area or island for preservation as wilderness...."

The Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP/EIS is the vehicle being used to fullfill the requirements of this law. The areas involved in this study meet the inventory criteria and were, therefore, carried through the planning process. Areas identified as suitable, if any, are only recommendations not decisions. Only Congress can designate a wilderness area.

3 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

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under Public Law 94-579, Section 603: provided, that prior to any recommendations for the designation of an area as wilderness, the Secretary shall cause mineral surveys to be conducted by the Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines to determine the mineral values, if any, that may be present in such areas.

The Bureau of Land Management has designated five wilderness study areas, the Bureau of Land Management further acknowledges that no mineral inventory exists. Public Law
4 94-579, Section 603 provides that a complete mineral inventory is required before it can designate an area as wilderness or prior to any recommendation for a wilderness designated area.

I request that you halt any further discussion or hearings on the management plan, due to the failure of the Bureau of Land Management to legally and properly conduct its
5 activities directed specifically towards the mineral inventories, your report is unsatisfactory to say the least.

I have sent a copy of my comments to my Nevada representatives: the Honorable Paul Laxalt, U.S. Senator; the Honorable Chic Hecht, U.S. Senator; the Honorable Barbara Vucanovich, U.S. Congresswoman.

I hereby request a reply to my letter and comments one through three.

Very truly yours,

Edward M. Tomany

EMT/ca

certified mail # P211527634

cc: Honorable Paul Laxalt
Honorable Chic Hecht
Honorable Barbara Vucanovich
file

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Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 13

4 No designation of wilderness areas has been made. A mineral survey is now being conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Mines for those areas recommended as suitable. Information contained in the report will be analyzed prior to the Secretary's recommendation to the President. The minerals information used in the Draft EIS was the best information available to the BLM at the time the Draft document was published.

5 No further hearings or meetings are planned.

Comment Letter

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REED FAMILY INVESTMENTS
15422 Eiffel Circle
Irvine, California 92714

February 17, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 265669
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

I am writing you to express my support for the wilderness recommendations currently under consideration for the following wilderness study areas:

Grapevine Mountains WSA (66 800 acres)
Queer Mountains WSA (81 550 acres)
Silver Peak Range WSA (35 000 acres)

The wilderness in and around the Death Valley National Monument is a priceless part of our national heritage and I firmly believe that the inclusion of these three areas is a responsible way to enhance the protection of that heritage. It is obvious that all three areas qualify for wilderness designation. In fact, the Grapevine and Queer Mountain WSA s are such obvious extensions of the Death Valley wilderness that it is surprising they have not been so designated prior to this; by their relative location to Death Valley alone they deserve to be protected. The Silver Peak Range, on the other hand, deserves consideration not only because it is an important wilderness in its own right but also because of its herds of wild horses and bighorn sheep. I urge you to not only extend the wilderness designation to the Silver Peak Range but to include in it the maximum acreage possible.

As none of the three areas presents significant resource conflicts I am confident that you will agree in extending the wildreness designations under consideration. The best and most logical use for these areas is as protected wilderness. We have lost too much already. Please don't let these areas continue at risk.

Thank you for your consideration. I would appreciate being appraised of your views in this matter and the final decision.

Sincerely,

Paul H. Reed

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Comment Letter

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SIERRA CLUB

Toiyabe Chapter — Nevada and Eastern California

February 13, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Attn: Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP
Bureau of Land Management
P. O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

We have carefully reviewed the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area RMP DEIS and have some comments on it for your consideration in preparing the final RMP.

As a general comment, we feel that a great deal of effort and care went into the analyses used in the development of alternatives and impacts expected from them. However, we found problems in selecting any one alternative that satisfied our preference in all issues and elements. Furthermore, we are not in total agreement with certain elements of BLM policy that directed the analyses with respect to some of the identified issues; thus further complicating our comments on the various alternatives and our preference.

It is our feeling that the rangeland management issue is of crucial concern since the long term quality of life is dependent on the land's productivity. We feel that every effort must be taken to achieve and maintain that productivity. We note the general mid and late vegetative status, the low productivity and the resulting rather low response potential of the allotment area as a whole. Still, we are rather concerned that the BLM Preferred Alternative is expected to produce a mere 1% improvement in ecological condition. Considering all the uncertainties in range data, the many assumptions that go into the analyses, etc., it seems that one percent improvement is likely well within the possible range in error of the calculation. It would be quite possible under this plan to end up with a net decrease in overall range quality. The rather large percentage of most allotments for which no trend in ecological status could be determined ("Not Apparent" column of Table 3-2) is one example that suggests this uncertainty. It would seem to us advisable to seek a higher percentage improvement in order to accommodate the possible error.

If a Preferred Alternative is to seek reasonable numbers of wildlife (which we think it should), a goal of higher percentage

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improvement will mean downward adjustments in numbers of livestock and/or horses and burros in areas where their grazing areas overlap, in livestock only in some other portions of allotments, and/or changes in AMPs and HMPs that help achieve the same goal. The percentage improvement in ecological condition to be sought as a goal will depend on how large the uncertainty is calculated to be. If high enough, methods approaching those of Alternative B or even C may be necessary as it applies to this issue.

Riparian habitat is, of course, an element of special concern because of its scarcity, its aesthetic appeal, its frequent association with sensitive species and the utilitarian value of its waters. The Preferred Alternative, as it stands, allows 50 streamside acres (about 40% of the total) the possibility of going into a decline. This risk seems undesirable and would be unacceptable under Alternative B. It seems to us that either reduction in burro and/or livestock or improved HMP/AMP is necessary on this acreage. We are also concerned that the 20 acres of non-saline wet meadow (100%) would decline in seral stage under most alternatives. Only some combination of livestock reduction and AMP activity (Alternative B?) can prevent the planning area's scarce non-saline wet meadows from deteriorating.

For the saline meadows and spring associated riparian habitat, Alternatives B or C offer the best hope for improvement by some combination of AMP/HMP and livestock/horse and burro reduction, and we think this is preferable. We find it difficult to accept that about 330 acres of saline meadows must go into decline by all alternatives, and suggest AMP/HMP or adjustments in numbers be made to reverse this projected loss.

The Las Vegas Group is highly supportive of steps to maintain or improve critical habitat in Ash Meadows, and we believe the HMP for this area should dovetail with U.S. Fish and Wildlife plans for establishing a refuge here.

On the issue of land disposal, we feel it is a good idea to identify lands for eventual disposal or trade where checkerboard or irregular ownership patterns would result in inefficient BLM management. And while we agree to the idea of identifying lands suitable for urban growth, we are not in favor of actual disposal except on an as-needed basis in conjunction with a definite community plan and with a timetable for completion of the development. The Preferred Alternative seems best in meeting

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these needs. Care should be taken, however, to avoid land disposals that would negatively impact sensitive species habitat. The Preferred Alternative also seems adequate regarding the designation of utility and planning corridors.

Our Group is especially interested in the designation of well qualifying units of wilderness in the planning area. We are in full agreement with the establishment of wilderness in the Silver Peak Range, but we feel there are excellent reasons for boundaries as outlined in Alternative B. The excellent wilderness attributes of the Silver Peak Range are well described in the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Wilderness Technical Report. Some of the finest wilderness is indeed found in the drainage of Icehouse Canyon and the west slope. These are associated with the long north-south crestline, its steep western slopes, and of course the colorful, well-watered drainage of Icehouse Canyon. The wildlife and wildhorse viewing opportunities here are splendid, and the pastel shadings associated with the volcanics are indeed unusual as well as beautiful.

Our Group conducted a memorable backpack into the headwaters of Icehouse Canyon last spring and can attest to the variety of terrain in the tributaries of the main canyon. We were quite disappointed, however, in not having the time on that trip to explore more than the upper rim of the middle fork of Piper Canyon, where we photographed fine examples of petrified logs and viewed the badlands of the lower canyon. The entire Piper Canyon basin would be a splendid addition to the wilderness system as proposed in Alternative B. This alternative's proposed additions on the east and southeast would add and protect in wilderness these well-forested slopes and the basin containing the scenic and ecologically important Jeff Davis and Blind Springs.

The wilderness values of this enlarged area seem to us to overshadow its mineral potential. The one area on the east classified as highly favorable for metallic minerals occupies but a small portion of the range. Development at this location may well have significant impact on the wildlife and habitat associated with Blind Spring. We find it interesting that no mining activity has historically occurred anywhere within the WSA including this rather accessible and presumably more desirable location. The GEM reports are speculative at best, while the wilderness values found in Alternative B for the Silver Peak Range are certainly high and not in the least speculative. Furthermore, what mineral values exist in the WSA will always be available as long as they are in the ground. Wilderness will not

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affect their existence; but, of course, the reverse is not the case since wilderness values are lost forever once mineral development has begun. The changes in the WSA boundary to accommodate an Alternative B proposal would be minimal, would inconvenience no one and are justified in greatly improving the identification of the wilderness boundary on the ground.

The Grapevine Mountains WSA is contiguous with WSA #4 in Death Valley National Monument, which has been administratively endorsed as suitable for wilderness by the National Park Service (NPS). The NPS has indicated their interest in the preservation of the wilderness integrity of the Grapevine Mountains across the BLM/NPS boundary. This seems highly desirable since mineral development immediately to the north on the BLM side of the border (Helmet Peak area) would impact negatively on their dramatically scenic unit. While the BLM Grapevine Mountains unit is the descending end portion of the range, it is nevertheless geologically and ecologically an integral part of the same unit and does exhibit dramatic wilderness appeal in its own right. The speculative moderate mineral potential on the BLM side of the boundary seems to offer insufficient justification for opening this border area to possible damaging impacts of incompatible multiple uses.

Though the Sierra Club does not subscribe to the long-term manageability problems perceived by the BLM to exist on flat bajadas, we feel nevertheless that a mountainous core unit as defined by Alternative B would be a minimum desirable size and configuration in the Grapevines. Intrusion of ORVs on bajadas excluded from wilderness would likely occur over time in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, but it has yet to be demonstrated by the BLM that most ORV drivers would not respect the law by enjoying their form of recreation in places where they are permitted to operate.

The Little Sand Spring WSA on the California side of its border with Nevada has been recommended by the CDCA and endorsed by the Sierra Club for a wilderness unit which would be contiguous with the BLM's Queer Mountain WSA in Nevada. Logic suggests that wilderness should exhibit natural boundaries rather than the straight lines of political subdivisions. Hence, we recommend that the BLM's preference for Queer Mountain should be a wilderness unit no less than that of Alternative B, contingent on the designation of the Little Sand Spring unit in California. The combined units would have enhanced wilderness values over those described for each of the two units separately.

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In summary, the Las Vegas Group feels that the Preferred Alternative should strive for an expectancy of improvement in ecological condition great enough to assure that possible errors in the rough data or methods of calculation do not lead to an actual decrease in range quality. We feel that this higher percentage improvement should be achieved by adjustments in stocking levels or horse and burro populations and in AMPs/EMPs in a manner that achieves "reasonable numbers" for the key wildlife species. The Preferred Alternative seems to handle utility corridor designation and planning adequately and provides for potentially desirable land disposals satisfactorily as long as adequate planning for, and timely implementation of, development plans are assured by the local involved entity. For wilderness, we urge a recommendation by the BLM of 33,620 acres for the Silver Peak WSA with boundaries as in Alternative B; 23,150 acres for the Grapevine Mountains WSA, also with boundaries as in Alternative B; and 42,640 acres for Queer Mountain WSA, contingent on the designation of a contiguous Little Sand Spring wilderness in California.

Sincerely,

Howard Booth
Wilderness Chair

Anita Bowen
Conservation Chair

Comment Letter

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SIERRA CLUB

Toiyabe Chapter – Nevada and Eastern California

February 14, 1985

Kemp Conn, Manager
BLM/Las Vegas District
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Manager Conn,

On behalf of the Public Lands Committee of the Toiyabe Chapter of the Sierra Club, I am submitting comments on the Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area.

We submit these comments with some trepidation as our previous comments appear not to have reached your office. Contrary to a statement in the DEIS on p. 76 which indicated that no comments were received in the scoping process from "stakeholder groups which are advocates of wilderness," the Sierra Club has sent four letters to you concerning the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP. Other conservation groups have also commented to our understanding. The first letter the Sierra Club sent on May 12, 1984, requested a scoping workshop in the Reno-Carson area so that northern Nevadans might more directly participate in the planning process. The 2nd & 3rd letters were sent in late May with detailed comments from the Las Vegas Group of the Sierra Club on both issues and alternatives and preliminary comments from myself as I had not yet received a copy of the scoping document. I sent the last letter in August, 1984, after I reviewed the scoping document, with very detailed recommendations on issues and alternatives.

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We are very disappointed that, if you received them, none of our recommendations appear to have been accepted and implemented in the DEIS, nor is there any explanation for rejecting our comments. To be sure you will have received our input, we would like to incorporate by reference all the comments we have sent to you on the Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP to date. (Copies of this correspondence are enclosed.) If you did not receive them previously, we would like to see our input reflected in the Final RMP/EIS, or an explanation for your rejection of them.

In any event, we would like to emphasize that the Sierra Club is interested in and concerned with this area of the public lands. We have participated in the planning process to date and will continue to participate whenever we have the opportunity to further our goals of good resource planning and management.

Overall, the quality of this document is high, despite the lack of any real information on the planning area's resources or management problems, or a positive plan for solving those

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 16

1 The statement you cite in paragraph two of your letter of February 14, 1985 which indicates no comments were received from "stakeholder groups which are advocates of wilderness" is in error. Your participation was as you indicated in your letter of February 14. Your concerns as expressed in those letters were considered, along with other public input, in the development of the wilderness recommendations.

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problems. In its errors of omission, the DEIS/RMP reflects not only current BLM policies which prohibit effective planning for and management of our public lands for multiple use and sustained yield, but also that this little planning area has been greatly neglected by the Bureau.

Issue statements in Chapter 1 are quite poor. All of the various multiple uses of the public lands have been reduced to three, mostly commodity oriented, uses - utility corridors and land sales, range management (or livestock grazing and two uses which interfere with the livestock industry - wildlife and wild horses and burros) and wilderness. We object to this cavalier treatment of the non-commodity values and believe this draft plan is inadequate because of these omissions.

Despite a statement on p. 6, ACECs were identified as an issue during scoping. We support among other candidates the NGRA nominations of several environmentally special areas which we feel should be evaluated by the Bureau for ACEC status: the BLM lands in Ash Meadows, Big Dune, Death Valley Overlook (Big Moly), the Monte Cristo mainais areas, Lone Peak, and Crescent Dunes.

On p. 2, Step 4, Analysis of the Management Situation, is defined as a description of current BLM management guidance, a discussion of existing problems and opportunities for solving them, and a consolidation of existing data that is needed to analyze and resolve the identified issues. We believe the DEIS/RMP would greatly benefit if more of this information is included in the RMP. In any event, we request a copy of the AMS so that we can review this information.

We found the discussion of the "management guidelines" in Chapter 2 to be inadequate as a justification for the omission of most of the resource values from active consideration in the DRMP/EIS. Guidelines change daily and are not an adequate basis for planning for T&E species, recreation, and the other resource values rejected from active planning consideration in this document.

We found the description on p. 14 of "Treatment 1," yearlong livestock grazing, to be ironic, since most resource problems are due to this type of "wild cow operation." It should have been entitled "Problem #1"! Also, we hope the statement on p. 17 that "all public land is open to geothermal, oil and gas leasing with no special stipulations except in bighorn sheep areas" is incorrect as it appears to contradict the Bureau's "management guidelines" much less national laws on T&E species as well as other critical resource management requirements.

In general, we believe that the range of alternatives is inadequate for half of the issues BLM did choose to address - wilderness, wildlife, and utility corridors (please see our previous comments). We do appreciate the analysis of a no grazing alternative.

We requested in our scoping comments for the DEIS/RMP disclosure

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of what existing rangeland monitoring studies are being carried on in the planning area. On p. 21 in the discussion of the preferred alternative, we learned that these studies will be "continued," but we request again that the FEIS/RMP disclose the extent of the current monitoring program.

Although one of the objectives of the preferred alternative is "to maintain or improve selected riparian and stream habitat to good or better condition," no management prescription is listed on p. 20 or p. 21 to reach this worthy objective. The FEIS/RMP should describe such a management prescription. We strongly support the reintroduction of big horn sheep, positive management for wild horses and burros, the introduction of big horn sheep, and the augmentation of elk in the Spring Mountains.

We support the utility corridor portions of the no action alternative, as the DEIS/RMP does not support the need for such extensive corridors which cover most of the surface area of the planning area. Only the most optimistic utility company planner could believe that the demand for power and therefore power lines will increase at such fantastic rates.

Please explain how the wilderness objective in alternative A "to obtain the greatest degree of consumptive use and production, while recommending only those areas with the highest wilderness values as suitable for wilderness designation" lead to a recommendation of 17,850 acres, the same wilderness recommendation as the preferred alternative with an objective "to recommend wilderness designation for those wilderness study areas where the values of wilderness designation are capable of balancing the other resource values and uses which would be foregone due to wilderness designation?" It would appear to us that these objectives are mutually exclusive and should have resulted in significantly different wilderness recommendations, which would have improved the range of alternatives as we suggested in our scoping comments. In general, this alternative is nearly a word-for-word repeat of the preferred alternative which may explain the non-balanced options in the preferred alternative.

2

We strongly support the management prescription in alternative B to "implement management treatments and/or facilities along 4.8 miles of streams to improve aquatic and riparian habitat conditions." We only regret that the Bureau will not attempt to protect more of the planning area's scarce riparian resources. We strongly support the wilderness recommendation for Silver Peak whose qualifications are well established in the DEIS/RMP and Technical Report. We also support the wilderness recommendations for the Grapevine WSA and the Queer Mountain WSA (contingent on the designation by Congress of Little Sand Spring WSA on the California side as wilderness).

In alternative C, we support the land disposal portion. We do not support the elimination of livestock grazing from the planning area.

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 16

2 The objectives of Alternative A call for some wilderness, "recommending only those areas with the highest wilderness values as suitable..." The area of highest wilderness values was also the only area to meet the objectives of the draft Preferred Alternative, "those wilderness study areas where the values of wilderness designation are capable of balancing the other resource uses..."

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Although the procedures are extremely difficult to understand, inventory information in Chapter 3 reveals that 77% of planning area is in "high seral" or good condition. The document does not indicate the reason for this unusually good range condition. Either BLM is doing something right in its management actions which should not be changed or the good conditions are a result of an accident - light livestock use due to the generally low productivity of range vegetation and/or lack of water to support more livestock numbers. In either case, overgrazing in terms of livestock overstocking does not appear to be the major resource problem in this planning area. Overuse by livestock and wild horses and burros of the scarce riparian resources is the real problem. We do not accept, however, BLM range management prescriptions which will result in predicted further degradation of riparian areas. Some other prescription must be developed without further adverse impacts to invaluable riparian areas. And current year-long grazing in 70% of the allotments is not an acceptable solution!

In Chapter 4, we were dismayed to learn that the extensive utility corridors would adversely impact deer habitat. We also learned that the massive land disposals contain areas of crucial habitat for T&E species and would adversely impact wild horse and burro habitat. We are very concerned to learn that land disposals may conflict with the remains of irrigation ditches found in Little Fish Lake Valley whose origin has not yet been determined. We strongly object to any land disposals which adversely affect wildlife or cultural resources. We urge BLM to avoid these adverse impacts and select the lowest alternative of land disposal and case-by-case utility corridor designation.

One of the assumptions for analysis on p. 85 really strains our credulity. We are informed that "baseline data for vegetative condition and trend is the best available." Therefore we fail to understand why "while this data is not adequate by itself for making forage allocation decisions, it is adequate for planning and analysis purposes." Either the data is adequate or it is not adequate. How much data does BLM need to actually make a range management decision?

It would be so easy for BLM to revise this document into an adequate plan for resource management in the Esmeralda-So. Nye Planning Area, since its foundations are so sound. We formally make this request. We realize that our request is not likely to be met given current BLM policy as all alternatives propose "do nothing and monitor," despite their superficial differences. We do commend Las Vegas District BLM staff for doing the best they could given time, staff, and policy constraints.

Sincerely,

Rose Strickland, Chair
Public Lands Committee

4

Comment Letter

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Sunshine Mining Company

Silver Peak Operations
P.O. BOX 97 PHONE: Area Code (702) 937-2282
Silver Peak, Nevada
89047

February 15, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O.Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

In response to the conclusions and general content of the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, Sunshine Mining Company strongly contends that the BLM has failed in its lawful obligations to the citizens of the United States, particularly those of the State of Nevada and Esmeralda and southern Nye Counties. This failure has resulted in an inadequate and invalid Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (hereafter RMP-EIS) due to the following omissions and/or errors:

I) Failure to adequately assess the mineral potential of the proposed Silver Peak Wilderness Study Area.
II) Disregard of majority public comments gathered during the scoping process.
III) Unsupported allegations and errors in facts.
IV) Disregard of the recommendations contained in the April, 1980 Proposed Wilderness Study Areas, Nevada BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory.

The above contentions are addressed in the order listed. All page numbers, chapter numbers, and section titles refer to the Draft Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

I) Failure To Adequately Assess The Mineral Potential Of The Proposed Silver Peak Wilderness Study Area.

Page 64 states that "another area constituting 74 percent of the WSA is classified as having a moderate potential for minerals." Recent modification of the criteria for assessing the mineral potential of Wilderness Study Areas (WSA's), as approved by Robert Burford, Director, U.S.Bureau of Land Management, is understood to include the following language:

In order for an area to be classified as having high potential for mineral resources, the following criteria must be met:

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Sunshine Mining Company

Silver Peak Operations
Box 97 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

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"The geologic environment, the inferred geologic processes, the reported mineral occurrences and/or valid geochemical/geophysical anomalies, and the known mines or deposits indicate high favorability for accumulation of mineral resources. The known mines or deposits do not have to be within an area which is being classified, but have to be in the same type of geologic environment."

The portions of the above paragraph underlined in red are those portions which have been modified, as approved by Mr. Burford.

The existence of a Tertiary volcanic caldera complex located within and to the east of the Wilderness Study Area Alternative A boundaries was first emphasized in the literature by Paul Robinson of the U.S.Geological Survey. The general outline of the caldera is shown on Map A, and is taken directly from the Geologic Map of the Rhyolite Ridge Quadrangle, Esmeralda County, Nevada, (Paul T. Robinson, John H. Stewart, Richard J. Moiola, and John F. Albers), and the Geologic Map of the Piper Peak Quadrangle, Esmeralda County, Nevada (John H. Stewart, Paul T. Robinson, John F. Albers, and Dwight F. Crowder). As emphasized in earlier written comments to the BLM concerning this area, caldera complexes of this type are known and well-documented sources for major mineral deposits. The similarity of the Silver Peak Caldera with other caldera systems in the western U.S. is striking. Map B shows the Silverton Caldera, located in southwestern Colorado (taken from W.S.Burbank, 1947, The San Juan Region - General Features, in Vanderwilt, J.W., Mineral Resources of Colorado: Denver, Colo., Colorado Mineral Resources Board, p. 396-408). The strong NW-SE trending structures shown on this map contain the Au - Ag - Pb - Cu - Zn vein deposits which have been mined for almost 100 years. Robinson et al mapped a similar strong structure system in and around the Silver Peak caldera, but without strong fissure filling. The explanation for this lack of surface exposure of hydrothermal vein material is that the Silver Peak caldera complex had a late episode of activity which deposited a sequence of latite flows over the area. These latites effectively capped mineralized veins which were present, obscuring their outcrop. The major veins a short distance to the east which have production histories (particularly the Nivloc and Sixteen-to-One Mines) lie in an area where either the latites were never deposited or have been eroded away - thus the vein outcrops are visible. Post - latite collapse of the caldera system re-established the strong NE-SW structure trend mapped by Robinso- et al, and subsequent local hydrothermal activity deposited fissure fillings (Mohawk and Sanger Veins) and anomalous metal mineralization (Mud Springs, Argentite Canyon).

Other calderas display the same structural similarities as the Silver Peak Caldera. Some of these to name a few are the Lake City Caldera, Creede Caldera, and Summitville Caldera. The literature contains numerous papers which cover these complexes.

Comment Letter

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page -3-

Sunshine Mining Company

Silver Peak Operations
Box 97 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

Anomalous mineralization both in and adjacent to the Silver Peak WSA has been documented by Sunshine Mining Company in earlier written comments to the BLM. Recent soil sampling on Sunshine's Mud Springs claim group reinforced the geochemical anomaly reported earlier. Analysis for 10 elements (Au, Ag, Pb, Cu, Zn, Hg, As, Sb, Tl, Mo) indicate anomalous amounts of Antimony (Sb - up to 34.61 ppm), Mercury (Hg - up to 0.9753 ppm), Thallium (Tl - up to 3.56 ppm), and Arsenic (As - up to 64.07 ppm). The trend of these anomalies is generally east-west as shown on Map C (with overlays), and projects directly into the WSA immediately to the west. All four metals showing anomalous values are typical indicators of epithermal precious metal deposits. Of particular interest is the thallium anomaly - thallium has only recently been shown to be an indicator of precious metal deposits (re: Ikramuddin, M. et al. Thallium - A Potential Guide to Mineral Deposits - included in Appendix).

Virtually all of the hard technical data on the mineral potential of the proposed Silver Peak WSA has been supplied to the BLM by Sunshine Mining Company. The area's rugged terrain and poor accessibility together with its present land status has no doubt discouraged previous geologic work by private industry. It must be emphasized that it is not common practice for a mining company to divulge hard geologic and geochemical data to the Federal Government for any reason. Sunshine has chosen to do so because we strongly contend that this area has high potential for mineral resources. Considering the new guidelines for assessment of mineral resource potential approved by Mr. Burford, assignment of a high potential for mineral resources is the only possible conclusion, unless the factual data presented is virtually ignored.

II) Disregard Of Majority Public Comments Gathered During The Scoping Process

It is apparent to Sunshine Mining Company after reviewing the RMP-EIS that the BLM is attempting to force upon the people of Nevada, and in particular the residents of Esmeralda County, a plan with conclusions which were formulated with obvious disregard for the majority of the comments and concerns submitted by the public during the scoping process.

The following specific examples support this contention. All page numbers and chapters refer to the Draft Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement.

1) Page 76, Chapter 4, Social Values, Wilderness: The final paragraph of this section states that "Although no input was received during the scoping process from individuals or stakeholder groups who are proponents of wilderness, it can be expected that their positions have changed little, if at all, from the positive support given the wilderness program in the initial, intensive inventory phase." This statement is an injustice to the individuals and companies who diligently attended the public hearings and submitted written comments during the scoping process. The BLM has no right or authority to make this assumption for proponents of wilderness. By doing so, the BLM is acting as a guardian for the views of these individuals and stakeholders.

1

5-4-3

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 17

1 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

Comment Letter

17-4

Sunshine Mining Company
Silver Peak Operations
Box 97 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

Other sentences and phrases in this section which illustrate the sympathetic leaning of the RMP-EIS authors towards wilderness proponents include "Any program that placed or has the potential of placing constraints on minerals development activities is viewed by the mining sector with apprehension if not alarm!" While many in the mining industry might agree with this statement, the inclusion of the exclamation point by the RMP-EIS authors implies that such a belief is contrary to generally accepted thought. Also, the inclusion of a portion of a submitted letter in this section which states "Locally, there is resentment of the suggestion that any publicly owned open spaces should be encumbered by regulations against particular uses. Unregulated public access to these lands is jealously guarded as a birthright." (Nevada Division of State Parks, letter to Area Manager, dated April 4, 1983)" helps to set the tone in this section that individuals who endorse the concept of multiple use are unreasonable, perhaps selfish.

In summary, while admitting on page 76 that "the majority of the comments received from residents of Planning Area A place the recreational values" of the possible WSA's "in the below average to poor category", much of the remaining text is used to set a tone of derision for comments and views supporting multiple use of the area.

5-44

2) Pages 74 & 75, Chapter 4, Wilderness - Silver Peak Range WSA: This 11 page section contains only a lengthy, flowing, "flowery" description of the wilderness characteristics, using such descriptive phrases as "colorful formations of white, pink, and green tuffs", "lush riparian areas", "attractive rock formations", and "high interest animals". Superlative adjectives such as "outstanding", "excellent", "remarkable", and "distinctive" are used repeatedly. This entire section is an example of the obvious bias of the RMP-EIS authors. No support for this description is offered in the form of public comment excerpts. By comparison, the section on page 64 which discusses the mineral potential of the proposed Silver Peak Range WSA contains no such superlative adjectives and virtually no mention of the written public comments supporting a high potential assessment for mineral potential. Such obvious bias on the part of the RMP-EIS authors is unprofessional and without defense.

III) Unsupported Allegations And Factual Errors

The RMP-EIS contains numerous unsupported allegations and factual errors which are misleading to a reader. Most of these errors and allegations conveniently support the recommended alternatives of the plan. Examples are:

2 1) Page 41, Chapter 3, Affected Environments, Cultural Resources: The final paragraph in this section states, "There is a constant attrition of these resources as surface disturbing activities relating to mining, ranching, farming, and the like take their toll. Some extremely important sites are being destroyed or extensively damaged with little regard to cultural values." This statement is very serious in that it states that mining and agricultural concerns are destroying "extremely important"

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 17

2 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

Comment Letter

17-5

page -5-

Sunshine Mining Company
Silver Peak Operations
Box 97 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

cultural sites. Sunshine Mining Company demands that this statement be removed from the plan, as no support or proof of these allegations is included. Such a statement is only self-serving to the authors of the RMP-EIS, and appears to be an effort to discredit the industries of Esmeralda County in the eyes of the public at large.

2) Page 65, Chapter 3, Wilderness, Diversity Criteria: The third paragraph of this section states, "The State of Nevada is underrepresented in the NWPS with only one designated area, the Jarbridge Wilderness, on the Oregon border." This statement must be removed
3 from the plan. The statutes (Public Law 94-579, 94th Congress, October 21, 1976, Title VI - Designated Management Areas, Section 603, Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study) do not provide that a state must be "adequately represented" in the NWPS. The inclusion of this statement in the plan is yet another effort by the RMP-EIS authors to streamline support of Preferred Alternative A.

3) Page 81, Chapter 3, Economic Conditions, Mining: The importance of mining and its impact on employment, income, and social values of the area are sorely understated in this brief section. In 1983, Sunshine Mining Company produced over $16 million worth of minerals. In addition,
4 other small mines in the area have come on line since 1980 and contributed significantly to mineral production in the county. According to the Nevada Dept. of Taxation, in 1983 the mines in Esmeralda County contributed over $15 million in net proceeds of mines taxed, compared to only $7.2 million in 1980 (a copy of the 1983-84 report on Net Proceeds of Mines by the Department of Taxation is included in the Appendix of these comments). The above figures indicate that the figures reported in the RMP-EIS should roughly be doubled to show a realistic picture of the importance of mining in the plan area.

4) Page 102, Chapter 4, Economic Conditions, Wilderness: The first paragraph of this section states, "No significant impact to the area economy would occur as a result of wilderness designation". This statement is astounding, considering the documented high potential for mineral resources discussed earlier, as well as the importance of mining to
5 the county economy and tax base, so clearly shown in the previous comment. The statement is even in direct conflict with a paragraph on the same page of the RMP-EIS, which states "inclusion of those acres of favorable metallic mineral potential within the area recommended as suitable for wilderness designation could, for the minerals industry as well as the adjacent communities, represent an opportunity foregone. This would be an adverse impact, perhaps significantly so. Due to the paucity of site specific data, it is impossible to quantify at this point in time."

As time passes and the orebodies presently being mined adjacent to the Silver Peak Range WSA are exhausted, development of the mineral potential of the WSA will be inevitable. The plan admits that "inclusion of those acres of favorable mineral potential within the area" into the proposed WSA could "represent an opportunity foregone", and result in "an adverse

5-15

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 17

3 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

4 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

5 This discussion has been deleted from the Wilderness final EIS.

Comment Letter

17-6

page -6-

Sunshine Mining Company

Silver Peak Operations
Box 37 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

impact, perhaps significantly so". After recognizing the economic consequences of inclusion of the area as proposed wilderness, to then recommend the area as such and blithely brush aside the consequences is a blatant example of omission of factual data which does not support the RMP-EIS authors' preconceived conclusions.

5) Page 76, Chapter 3, Wilderness, Silver Peak Range WSA: The last paragraph of this section states, "Mineral development concerns are minimal because only 186 acres of mining claims and no leases are located in the WSA." The only factual portion of this statement deals with the lack of mining claims and leases in the proposed WSA. The bulk of the text of Sunshine Mining Company's comments has dealt with the mineral potential of the area. To conclude that no potential exists for mineral development based on a physical lack of mining claims is a totally false assumption. As discussed previously, much of the proposed WSA is overlain by young tertiary latites which cap underlying vein systems and mineralization. Any claim located on ground which contains no evidence of a mineral discovery is, by law, void. The present status of this area (i.e., proposed WSA) precludes any company from locating claims and attempting to drill beneath the latite cap rock. The authors of this section of the RMP-EIS will no doubt be quick to point out that the present land status of the area does not prohibit location and assessment of mining claims within the area. However, it is hard to imagine these individuals supporting the construction of drill sites and roads in this "remarkable pristine" area, among the "colorful formations of white, pink, and green tuffs", frightening the "high interest animals". In reality, this area is off limits to further meaningful mineral evaluation under its present status.

6

5-46

IV) Disregard Of The Recommendations Contained In The April, 1980 Proposed Wilderness Study Areas, Nevada BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory.

The initial Nevada BLM Intensive Wilderness Inventory study recommended in the April, 1980 report entitled "Proposed Wilderness Study Areas" on page 303 that for the area which includes the present proposed Silver Peak Range WSA, "Zero acres are recommended for Wilderness Study Area status". "72,779 acres should be dropped from further wilderness consideration". The rationale for recommendation was: "Although a portion of this unit contains more than 5,000 acres of contiguous public land that generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable, neither outstanding opportunities for solitude nor a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are present."

7

Between April, 1980 and the present time, the BLM has disregarded its original recommendation, and subsequently changed its views on the wilderness characteristics of the area. Since it is unlikely that the area has physically improved during this short time, it is reasonable to assume that this about face on the part of the BLM is due primarily to the influence of wilderness proponents within the BLM itself, supported by selective utilization of public input

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 17

6 Presence or absence of mining claims was never a factor in the determination of mineral potential in this document. This statement dealt with the manageability of the area as wilderness. Presence of mining claims could in the future present a management problem if they were proven valid and developed.

7 The BLM inventoried the land in the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area in 1979 and published the findings and proposed decisions for designating wilderness study areas in April, 1980. The inventory proposal for Silver Peak was to not identify the area as a wilderness study area (WSA). After considering the inventory information, along with the comments received from a 90-day public comment period, the BLM's Nevada State Director decided to include 33,900 acres of the Silver Peak area as a WSA. The final inventory decisions were mailed to those people who had expressed interest and were published in the Federal Register on November 7, 1980.

The State Director's decision on Silver Peak, along with 22 other areas, was appealed by Mr. Walter Benoit to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA).

On March 1, 1982, the IBLA affirmed the State Director's decision that all 23 areas were properly designated as WSAs.

Comment Letter

17-7

page -7-

Sunshine Mining Company
Silver Peak Operations
Box 97 - Silver Peak, Nevada 89047

gathered during the scoping process. Sunshine Mining Company strongly opposes this method of planning - it is a gross disservice to the people of the state of Nevada.

****

In summary, Sunshine Mining Company contends that the potential for mineral resources within the proposed Silver Peak Range WSA must be changed to "high", based upon the evidence presented in these and previous comments. Sunshine also strongly contends that the RMP-EIS is flagrantly biased in support of Preferred Alternative A, containing misinformation, unsupported allegations, errant facts, and selective utilization of public comment. By disregarding the majority of the comments generated by Esmeralda and Nye County residents during the scoping process, the resulting RMP-EIS represents primarily the pro-wilderness opinions of certain authors of the plan. Because of this bias, Sunshine contends that the present plan must be revised, with the revision deleting the false information itemized in these comments. Also, based upon the geologic evidence and data presented in Section 1, the Preferred Alternative for the Silver Peak Range must be changed to "No Action".

For Sunshine Mining Company,

Allan R. Young

Allan R. Young
Resident Manager
Silver Peak Operations

Donald F. Earnest

Donald F. Earnest
Chief Geologist
Silver Peak Operations

ARY:OFE/dv

Comment Letter

18-1

The Nature Conservancy

Western Regional Office
785 Market Street
San Francisco, California 94103

February 15, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

RE: Nature Conservancy Response to Esmeralda-Southern Nye BMP

Dear Kemp:

The Nature Conservancy is a national, non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of natural diversity. Over the past 30 years, we have helped set aside over 2,250,000 acres of land which provides habitat for some of our nation's most endangered species of plants and animals, as well as many unique habitats. The Nature Conservancy has been involved in the protection of several areas of Nevada, most particularly aquatic systems such as Ash Meadows, which is located in the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area of the Bureau of Land Management. I believe we share a continuing concern over proper future management of this aquatic system of national significance. The Nature Conservancy has also identified other areas on both private and public lands within this Planning Area that our scientists feel are of high ecological value, and we would like to continue our cooperation with BLM to work for the best management of these areas as well. I have a few specific comments that I would like to submit for your consideration:

1. The Nature Conservancy expresses its support for Alternative C, excepting therein provisions calling for 0 grazing and 189,675 acres of wilderness. Of particular concern to us is the protection of rare plant species and aquatic habitat at Ash Meadows from any possible threats. We view grazing by either livestock or by wild horses and burros as an unacceptable threat to the Ash Meadows area, and urge the elimination of grazing combined with an active monitoring program to determine status of rare plant populations in the Ash Meadows region.

National Office, 1800 North Kent Street, Arlington, Virginia 22209

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Comment Letter

18-2

Mr. Kemp Conn
February 15, 1985
Page two

2. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (p. 6). The designation of the Ash Meadows area, including adjoining BLM land including but not limited to Carson Slough, as an ACEC would serve to extend and solidify special management procedures necessary to protect the rare biota found in this region. The Big Dune area is also an area of high biological significance, and ACEC status for this region would represent a positive move in its future management. The Nature Conservancy supports designation of ACEC's in such areas of biological significance.

3. The Carson Slough grazing allotment should be reduced (p. 20) in all areas where it presents a threat to aquatic habitat or to populations of plants of concern, including those species that are candidates for Federal listing as endangered species. Grazing throughout the rest of the planning area, with the exception of Ash Meadows, should be allowed so long as provisions are made for the protection of riparian systems and endangered species.

4. Habitat for the Amargosa toad (Bufo nelsoni), a Federal candidate species, is identified as subject to disposal in Land Disposal Unit K (Planning Corridor E). Some of these lands also support streams with populations of a speckled dace (Rhinichthys osculus ssp.) that is a potentially endangered species. As noted on page 92, disposal of public lands which provide habitat for these species would be a significant adverse impact to these animals. The Nature Conservancy supports not only continued public ownership of these lands, but management of them to ensure future protection of these rare species. If land disposal is considered, future use of that land should be restricted to provide protection to those species.

5. The sensitive plant species of Ash Meadows (p. 49, 91-92) are known from relatively small areas within Ash Meadows. Not only should those known areas be protected from threats from grazing, but other potential areas should be searched for these species. The elimination of grazing from the Ash Meadows area is an essential step to facilitating recovery of the area's flora.

The Nature Conservancy is currently trying to raise the money to develop a Nevada Natural Heritage Program which will be responsible for maintaining an ongoing inventory of rare plants, animals, and communities of Nevada. As data are analyzed by this program, our understanding of the location and significance of rare species and habitats in the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area will improve. We hope to cooperate with the Bureau of Land Management in the gathering and analysis of these data, which will be available to help both organizations develop and update their agendas in Nevada.

Comment Letter

18-3

Mr. Kemp Conn
February 15, 1985
Page three

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the planning process in this diverse portion of the Great Basin. Please keep me informed as to further developments of mutual interest to BLM and The Nature Conservancy.

Yours truly,

Dave P. Livermore
Great Basin Field Representative

DPL:GC

Comment Letter

19-1

THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1935

February 8, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft RMP/EIS for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area.

5-49

The Wilderness Society strongly objects to the Preferred Alternative, which would recommend a mere 17,850 acres as wilderness -- only 9.0% of the entire WSA acreage and just .5% of the Planning Area. Considering the glaring scarcity of designated wilderness in Nevada to date, as admitted by BLM in the report, failure to make a stronger wilderness recommendation is inexcusable.

All five areas have already demonstrated their wilderness qualities by being inventoried. All have opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation, many of which are outstanding. The ecosystems in these WSAs -- Pinyon and Juniper woodlands, Great Basin Sagebrush, Saltbrush-Greasewood and Creosote Bush -- are not well represented among designated wilderness areas, as BLM points out. However, BLM's further argument that these ecosystems are well represented among other WSAs which may be recommended for wilderness is a weak and equivocal one.

Non-designation as wilderness would have an adverse impact on primitive and unconfined recreational activities. On the other hand, designation would not only protect these as well as archaeological and scenic values, but would also benefit cultural resources through protection from surface disturbing activities and vandalism.

The main argument against wilderness designation appears to be mining. Yet, with the exception of Pigeon Spring and a tiny portion of Silver Peak, favorability for minerals and energy ranges from none to moderate in the five areas.

278 POST STREET, #400, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94108

(415) 982-2795

Comment Letter

19-2

Considering the tiny portion of the Planning Area that these five WSAs represent, it is difficult to believe that their mineral value can be so high as to preclude all other resource uses, such as wilderness, that are more readily available here than anywhere else in the Planning Area.

GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS

This WSA boasts a number of wilderness qualities: heavily forested mountains, presenting outstanding opportunities for solitude; a highly dissected and rugged ridgeline; a transitional vegetation zone; colorful scenery; and a mostly natural character. Grapevine Mountains also represents a logical extension of Death Valley National Park, administratively endorsed as suitable for wilderness designation. The southern part of the WSA is completely natural and has the highest wilderness values, including deep colorful canyons and heavily forested ridges. It is imperative this area be protected from surface disurbing activities. We suggest that the entire WSA, with the possible exception of the northern tip, be recommended as wilderness.

PIGEON SPRING

Pigeon Spring features a steep-walled canyon and rolling ridges which both offer outstanding opportunities for solitude. The high point of the ridge is the highest point of the Sylvania Mountains, and offers good views of the White Mountains. Vehicle use potential and poorly defined boundaries are weak reasons to designate this area as not suitable for wilderness designation.

QUEEN MOUNTAIN

Most of this WSA is natural. It is large, adjacent to other WSAs (two of which have been recommended as wilderness), and in an area of little development other than historic mining activity. BLM states that "with two exceptions, the WSA is natural ... (and) has outstanding opportunities for solitude because of its large size, blocky configuration, and topographical screening in the mountainous portion." There seems to be no reason not to designate at least the majority of the WSA, with the possible exception of the northern and eastern ends, as suitable for wilderness designation. Most

Comment Letter

19-3

Mr. Kemp Conn

February 8, 1985
Page 3

of the surface disturbance will be in the northern end, not in the entire WSA.

RESTING SPRING

This area is natural with the exception of the road dividing the WSA. There are no manmade intrusions and no to low favorability for any minetal or energy resources. The potential threat of ORV use is insufficient reasoning to recommend this area as non-wilderness. No mention is made of current ORV use, so there is no reason that prohibitive efforts cannot be maintained in the future.

SILVER PEAK RANGE

This "remarkably pristine" area is a prime example of true wilderness, and should be entirely designated as such. Silver Peak Range boasts outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation and solitude, archaelogical and geological resources, numerous springs and outstanding special features. Wilderness designation would protect the pristine and naturally rich area. "Reclusive species such as bighorn, mountain lion and spotted bat would benefit most from reduction in human harassment by vehicular access." Rugged topography, diverse plant communities, abundant wildlife, high scenic quality -- what more does BLM want from a wilderness area?

1 The argument presented for non-wilderness designation (that the most significant manageability issue is the difficulty of defining existing boundaries) is ridiculous. Nowhere in the Wilderness Act does the term "easily described boundaries" define wilderness. Not only would surface disturbance in the recommended undesignated area "cause a loss of naturalness and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation on the 17,234 undesignated acres," including the remarkably pristine Mud Springs-Blind Spring and Piper Canyon areas, but these activities would adversely impact similar opportunities in the recommended designated area! "Over a prolonged period of time, wilderness characteristics and values may be irretrievably lost as a direct consequence of those acres not being recommended as suitable."

5-50

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 19

1 Manageability was not a deciding factor in the development of the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative). The area recommended nonsuitable for wilderness designation (17,234 acres) has either a moderate or high potential for metallic minerals and geothermal resources. In addition deletion of this area avoids potential conflicts with mining claims along the periphery of the WSA.

Comment Letter

19-4

Mr. Kemp Conn

February 8, 1985
Page 4

2 We must admit to some confusion in the "Rangeland Management" section of the Affected Environment chapter. Why have ranchers expressed concern over "lock-up" of wilderness lands, when no mention of grazing use on the WSAs was mentioned? We would appreciate BLM explaining this further.

3 We are also not satisfied with the Environmental Consequences chapter as it refers to the WSAs. Merely citing that "Wilderness values would be lost" or that "loss of wilderness values would not be significant because the values at risk do not meet the minimum wilderness criteria" is insufficient description of environmental consequences.

We would only again repeat that wilderness is a sorely lacking resource in the state of Nevada. These five WSAs have demonstrated their wilderness qualities, and should be protected for the enjoyment and appreciation of future as well as present generations. We urge you to seriously reconsider the preferred alternative, and instead adopt Alternative C, or at least a compromise between Alternatives B and C.

Sincerely,

Patricia Hedge

Patricia Hedge
Regional Director, California-Nevada

Joi Galbraith

Joi Galbraith
Regional Assistant, California-Nevada

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 19

2 Some members of the ranching and mining sectors interpret wilderness as a "lock-up" against any uses except occasional solitary enjoyment by those whose livelihood does not depend on the economic use of the natural resources found on the areas proposed for wilderness designation. In the planning area, as in many parts of the west, there is some resentment of the suggestion that any publicly owned open spaces should be encumbered by regulations against particular uses. Unregulated access to public lands is often jealously guarded as a birthright and wilderness, perhaps more than any other Bureau program, threatens that perception.

3 Wilderness impacts have been rewritten in the Wilderness Final EIS.

Comment Letter

20-1

WHOA!

BOARD OF TRUSTEES
DAVID R. BELDING
JACK C. McELWEE
GORDON W. HARRIS
BELTON P. MOURAS
GERTRUDE BRONN, Honorary
In Memoriam
LOUISE C. HARRISON
VELMA B. JOHNSTON, "Wild Horse Annie"

WILD HORSE ORGANIZED ASSISTANCE INC.
A Foundation for the Welfare of Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros

P.O. Box 555
Reno, Nevada 89504
Telephone: 329-9906
Area Code "702"
851-4517

January 6, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Post Office Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Re: ESMERALDA-SOUTHERN NYE PLANNING AREA

Dear Mr. Conn:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Esmeralda-Southern Nye Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement. WHOA is pessimistic that this process will change the statis quo, however, for administrative purposes we submit our comments for consideration in the final land use plan. WHOA is numb from the numerous plans, but this one was the hardest to digest. We are thankful for the summary, which simplified a hard to track document.

LIVESTOCK

WHOA supports Alternative B for livestock grazing. The preferred alternative only maintains what is a policy of no action and monitoring. Range improvements for livestock grazing on public lands, with taxpayer dollars, should be constructed only after monitoring shows the need. The projects must be multiple use. Any waters developed on public land with tax dollars must benefit multiple use, including wild horses, and any improvements with private dollars on public lands must have stipulations on the permits for multiple use, including wild horses. The establishment of sufficient monitoring studies to attribute use to the particular animals, to the extent possible. Should the offender be livestock, the reductions should be made in livestock. Should the offender be wild horses, the reduction in wild horses. Should the offense come from both the reductions should be made on a pro-rata basis.

MONITORING Will sufficient funds be available to carry out the monitoring program so that further down the road we are not looking at the same problems as now? Who will read the monitoring studies and how often will they be read?

Comment Letter

20-2

Page two-Esmeralda-Southern Nye EIS/RMP

WILDLIFE

WHOA supports ALTERNATIVE B for wildlife, with monitoring providing adjustments in wild horses and livestock as data requires. Should adjustments be necessary they should be made first in critical wildlife habitat first.

WILDERNESS

Wilderness enhances and protects wildlife and wild horse habitat. WHOA supports ALTERNATIVE A for wilderness. Wild horse management plans must be an integral part of the proposed package to Congress as part of the existing use.

LAND TENURE

WHOA supports ALTERNATIVE A as the need arises. Ample opportunity exists for community expansion and agricultural development without seeking relief from that system.

CORRIDORS

WHOA supports ALTERNATIVE A as the need arises.

WILD HORSES

Wild horse habitat is quickly diminishing overall due to livestock operators and private lands. Horses reside in only 30% of the State of Nevada, and that is being reduced significantly. WHOA has agreed in the past to reductions of wild horses, however, we believe that any further reductions should be based on range data that substantiates the need. That means proper monitorings that attribute use to the particular animal to the extent possible. The law not only requires you protect, management and control the wild horse; but that the BLM also shall provide for their biological needs, one of which is water. All waters on public lands must be for multiple use purposes or stipulations on the permits to provide water for wild horses.

Most sincerely,

Dawn Y. Lappin (Mrs.)
Director

Comment Letter

21-1

Wildlife Management Institute

Suite 725, 1101 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 • 202/371-1808

DANIEL A. POOLE
President
E. R. JAHN
Vice-President
L. I. WILLIAMSON
Secretary
WESLEY M. DIXON, Jr.
Board Chairman

February 11, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Post Office Box 26539
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

The Wildlife Management Institute is pleased to comment on ESMERALDA-SOUTHERN NYE PLANNING AREA DRAFT RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN and ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT, NEVADA.

G-1-63

The plan is not satisfactory for wildlife. The preferred alternative increases livestock grazing by 350 AUM and shows major increases in wildlife numbers, but does not tell us how that increase will be attained. Alternative B, which "...emphasizes wildlife numbers..." shows a decline in mule deer and only modest increases in other wildlife numbers. None of the alternatives offers details on how the wildlife changes will be accomplished.

There is not enough emphasis on T&E species. Livestock should be controlled or eliminated in all areas of crucial wildlife habitat.

Water is the key habitat element, and it is good that 75 acres of riparian area are to be fenced. But that is not enough; at least 90 percent of all riparian areas in this arid section should be fenced.

1

The only alternative that shows maximum wilderness is "C", yet that is the same one that completely eliminates grazing by domestic livestock. Realistically and politically there always will be grazing on the public lands, so inclusion of a no-grazing alternative is a waste of your time in preparing the report and our time in reading it. To tie no-grazing with maximum wilderness is not reasonable. Wilderness will not reduce grazing, and the consolidation of both items in the same alternative is not fair to supporters of wilderness and recreation.

The subsidies to grazing permittees are particularly large in this plan, among the highest we have seen:

Number of allotments --	16
Number of "I" allotments --	6
Cost of proposed range developments --	$508,735
Average subsidy per allotment --	$ 26,776
Average subsidy per "I" allotment --	$ 84,789

DEDICATED TO WILDLIFE SINCE 1911

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 21

1 The No Grazing Alternative is included as a matter of policy in as much as it provides for a broader range of alternatives and affords the manager another reference point on which to base decisions. During the alternative development stage, a range of alternatives was developed for each issue. Once this was completed the RMP/EIS team combined all issues into four alternatives which they felt provided a logical progression of management prescriptions and helped to simplify the analysis. Alternative A proposes a maximum level of livestock grazing while recommending a minimum acreage for wilderness designation. Alternative B reduced livestock grazing and increased acreage recommended for wilderness designation. Alternative C then eliminated livestock grazing while increasing the area recommended for wilderness designation to a maximum. This was a logical sequence of events for both issues and never meant to tie no grazing with maximum wilderness. These alternative are then analyzed and a Preferred Alternative is selected. The Preferred Alternative and subsequent Proposed Plan may be any one of the proposed alternatives, but in most cases, as in this RMP, it integrates portions of all alternatives analyzed. It would have been an overwhelming task to analyze every possible array of management prescriptions.

Comment Letter

21-2

Mr. Keep Conn -2- February 11, 1985

Some specific comments follow:

Page 1. Wildlife is only mentioned in the issues once, and then as the last two words of the last issue.

Page 7, right column, 2nd paragraph. "The preferred alternative will strive to maintain or improve range conditions..." It seems to us that the preferred alternative would improve conditions. Striving is great, but it is not worth the more than $508,000 in range developments.

Page 9, last paragraph. Roads only will avoid riparian area "to the extent practical," and riparian areas only will be improved "where possible." This language is unacceptable.

Page 18. Only 9 percent of the WSA's are recommended for inclusion in the wilderness system. This is far too low, and it illustrates the plan's commodity emphasis.

Page 33. It is good to list the State of Nevada's Reasonable Wildlife Numbers and their population estimates. BLM also needs to set up its own goals or to adopt the state goals in total.

Page 92. The land scheduled for disposal in the preferred alternative contains aquatic and stream bank habitat. Disposal of this kind of land is questionable any place. It is especially unacceptable in arid areas.

Pages 93-94. The plan should do better on riparian management.

These remarks have been coordinated with William B. Morse, the Institute's Western Representative.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Poole
President

DAP:dc

5-54

Comment Letter

22

WOMEN IN MINING

February 7, 1985

Mr. Keep Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn,

The following comments concern the Esmeralda-Southern Nye RMP alternatives. After reading the draft alternatives I find that I cannot fully support any alternative, in total. I support the land tenure, corridors, and rangeland management of the Preferred Alternative, however, I am firmly opposed to the Silver Peak Range wilderness designation.

As a member of Women In Mining and a strong supporter of the mining industry, I feel that nearly all public land should be open to mineral entry. Our country as a whole needs the minerals and metals produced to maintain our high standard of living and national security. The state and local economy benefits from the jobs created by the minerals industry. Economic mineral deposits are not convenience items which are available everywhere. A prospector must be given the opportunity to search vast amounts of land to locate the few economic deposits.

I am opposed to all of the Wilderness Study Areas in the management plan. I am especially shocked that large acreages containing moderate to high mineral potential are being knowingly considered for withdrawal. Vast acreages of Nevada will retain suitable wilderness characteristics, due to the desert and mountainous terrain, without a federal wilderness designation. Too much public land, wilderness and otherwise, has already been withdrawn from mineral entry and other multiple uses.

Thank you,

Nancy J. Wotruba

Nancy J. Wotruba, Member
Women In Mining

	Int	Date
CM		
DM		
AD		
AD-MT		
CM-DPDC		
CM-WSRA		
CM-WSRA		
AD-CAMMT		

Battle Mountain Chapter
P.O. Box 1064, Battle Mountain, Nevada 89820

Comment Letter

23

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager
BLM
Las Vegas, NV 89126

14.02.85.

Dear Mr. Conn,

In reference to the DRT/EIS for the Esmeralda- Southern Nye Planning Area, I support the Preferred Alternative but with the following comment:

I question the merit and what will be achieved by classifying some of the Silver Peak WSA as a WA. The topography will protect this core area,as is,without looking out other potential resources,should these be discovered in the future. Moreover there is the vast Death Valley National Monument nearby and others,closer to population centers are proposed as wilderness areas. Even your own report seems to concur by stating on p. 97 "It would not significantly expand the opportunities for wilderness experiences available to residents of the metropolitan areas within a day's drive".

1 Looking up more acreage for a few for their exclusive use is not warranted. The report does not touch on the question as to the projected increase in numbers of persons/days should Silver Peak declared a WA. So many wilderness areas have been and will be designated that a mere designation no longer will allure more hikers in significant numbers. The 1982 figures sometimes quoted are therefore outdated. The potential increase in recreational resources use is a function of information made available,covering a specific area. Obviously such information can be provided without wilderness designation. Support therefore a non-wilderness designation for Silver Peak WSA.

Sincerely,

Harry Zeits

Harry Zeits
Box 24
Porthill, ID 83853

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 23

1 Visitor use has been projected and analyzed in the final EIS.

Comment Letter

24

S M FRANKEL
11855 GOSHEN AVE. #9
LOS ANGELES, CA 90049

Feb 14, 1984

Mr. Kemp Conn Dist. Mgr.
Bureau of Land Mgmt.
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nev. 89126

Dear Mr. Kemp Conn;

I am a citizen of California, who has personally enjoyed desert expanse in a undisturbed state. I would appreciate your support in wilderness recommendations for:

Grapevine Mtns. WSA 66.8K ac
Queen Mtn. WSA 81,550 ac
Silver Peak Range WSA 35000 ac

B-56

Comment Letter

25-1

1

5141 Arabian River #277
Las Vegas, NV. 89103
Feb 15, 1985

Kemp Conn, Distr. Mgr
Bureau of Land Mgmt
Las Vegas, NV.

Dear Mr. Conn:

This is in reference to the BLM's recommendation against Wilderness status for the Grapevine Mountains, Queen Mountain, and 1/2 of the Silver Peak Mountains.

I have been visiting the Death Valley area, both as a California resident and as a recent resident of Nevada, for 35 years and know the area well.

For many years, I have watched with dismay the gradual destruction and deterioration of many of our beautiful and fragile desert areas. I feel strongly that we must do what we can to preserve areas such as these that surely meet all of the requirements for Wilderness designation.

Comment Letter

25-2

(2)

It would be a shame if California land contiguous to Death Valley were protected by Wilderness status, but the western land were left unprotected (The Grapevine + Queen Mountain).

I feel that your argument against recommending against Wilderness status for Queen Mountain and 1/2 of the Silver Peak Range (difficulty of enforcement) is specious. Certainly these areas can be posted and monitored, if appropriate, can be prosecuted.

Silver Peak, although not north of Death Valley, is a spectacular piece of desert and is a sanctuary for many mountain sheep and wild horses. That alone should be reason enough for Wilderness protection.

Thank you for considering the thoughts contained in this letter.

Yours truly,

[illegible]

5-57

Comment Letter

26

FEB 16, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

We support Wilderness recommendations for the Silver Peak Range WSA (55,000 Acres), the Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 Acres) and the Queen Mountain WSA (81580 Acres).

Wilderness is the best and most logical use for these areas as none have significant resource conflicts and all clearly qualify for Wilderness designation.

Silver Creek Range is important to large herds of Bighorn sheep and wild horses as well as having outstanding wilderness qualities.

Both Grapevine and Queen Mountain WSA's are logical extensions of the Death Valley National Monument area and should be protected.

Sincerely
Betty Mason
Rex Mason
Scott Mason
1385 Harty St.
Bakersfield Ca. 93304

Comment Letter

27

3/11/85

Dear Mr. Conn:

I support wilderness designations for:

Grapevine Mtns.
Queen Mtn
Silver Peak Range

I believe all of the above are qualified for wilderness designation.

I feel that the Grapevine and Queen Mtn are extensions of the Death Valley wilderness complex and should be protected.

None of the 3 areas have resource conflicts and I feel that wilderness is the best use for them.

Lastly, since Silver Peak Range is home to large herds of bighorn sheep & wild horses, the maximum acreage should be recommended.

Sincerely
Suzanne Madden

5-58

Comment Letter

28

RECEIVED
Bureau of Land Management
FEB 20 1985
LAS VEGAS
DISTRICT OFFICE
Las Vegas, Nevada

Mrs. Jo Naugat
1275 Pompa Dr.
Port Orchard, WA 98101

Feb. 14, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Mgr.
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

DM	Init	Date
ADM		
DMD		
DM SVS		
CT CHIEF		
AD OPERATIONS		
PM PLANNING		
PM ECONOMICS		

Dear Mr. Conn:

I have read that of the BLM wildlands surrounding the Death Valley Monument, specifically the areas known as Grapevine Mountains, Queen Mountain and the Silver Peak Range, the BLM is considering recommending that only one-half of the Silver Peak Range for wilderness to Congress.

This means designating only 17,500 acres for wilderness protection out of a total of 183,350 acres.

The Sierra Club states none of these areas have significant resource conflicts, so what better use for them than preservation as public wildlands?

Please reconsider your decision and give the entire area BLM's support. Such support, once relinquished, can never be of any use once Congress acts. We Americans all need as much natural beauty as we can hang on to.

Sincerely,
Jo Naugat

Comment Letter

29

Jim Mahoney
1200 S. Torrey Pines Dr. #140
Las Vegas, NV 89102

BLM
P.O. Box 265669
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear BLM:

I must protest your failure to include the full 66,800 acres of the Grapevine Mtns. WSA as "Wilderness Alternative Recommended".

Difficulty of controlling vehicle access is a reason for wilderness designation.

Truly Yours,

Jim Mahoney

9-59

Comment Letter

30

BERNSHAW PHOTOGRAPHY
Box 6235
Salt Lake City, Utah
84106

December 28, 1984

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Mgr.
Esmeralda-Southern Nye
R.M.P. Team
Bureau of Livestock and Mining
Las Vegas, Nevada

Dear Mr. Conn:

COMMENTS ON: ESMERALDA-SOUTHERN NYE Draft R.M.P.

I most vehemently and totally object to your use--yes, "use"--of a picture of a bighorn sheep on the covers of your Esmeralda-Southern Nye Draft R.M.P. & E.I.S. and Wilderness Technical Report.

Instead, be a bit more honest and take a picture of a cow. Or a drilling rig. Or a bulldozer.

Your disgusting draft R.M.P. does honor to James Watt, whose glorious portrait should be on the covers of these publications.

I find it impossible for myself to responsibly respond to...

(a) your puny wilderness recommendations and lack of co-operation with the National Park Service's desire to see wilderness designation for your BLM Grapevine Mts. which form an ecological whole with Death Valley's Grapevine Mts.;

(b) your possible pro-gambler, pro-land speculator and pro-developer land disposal of 245,000 to 95,000 acres;

(c) your refusal to reduce and restrict (over-)grazing despite the lousy condition of most of your range, and your preference instead to "improve" the range instead of removing the damn cows.

For the life of me, I wonder to high-heaven how anyone who calls themselves a wilderness/recreation coordinator ("Poppy" Benson & Cal McKinley) or a wildlife biologist (Mark Maley & Mike Ford) can allow their name and professional reputation to be associated with this document. Amen, brothers. Earth First!

Yours very most sincerely,

Elliott E. Bernshaw

Elliott E. Bernshaw

Comment Letter

31

Randal Serch
PO Box 1532
San Juan Capistrano, CA
92693

2/14/84

Dear Mr. Conn:

I urge you to support wilderness recommendation for the following 3 areas:

1. Silver Peak Range WSA – 35,000 acres
   I understand this area is important to a healthy herd of bighorn sheep
2. Quartz Mt – as an extension of the Death Valley area
3. Grapevine Mts WSA also as an extension of Death Valley area.

All these areas qualify for wilderness designation. Please recommend them as such.
I will be watching for your actions.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Randal Serch

5-60

Comment Letter

32

VIRLIS L. FISCHER
2608 VICTORY AVENUE
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89101

January 14, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P. O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Kemp:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the Draft EIS for the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area. I think your analysis of all factors has been thorough and highly professional, and I wish to indicate hereby my support of the Preferred Alternative. I also agree that four of the five WSAs do not qualify for wilderness recommendation. The portion of the WSA in the Silver Peak Range which you are recommending for wilderness, while not the greatest, nevertheless does not arouse any opposition from me.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

Very truly yours,
Virlis L. Fischer
Virlis L. Fischer

Comment Letter

33

1162 Buena Vista #1
Reno, Nev. 89503
Feb 19, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nv 89126

Dear Mr. Conn,

The DEIS for the Esmeralda District regarding wilderness designation is not adequate. Both the Grapevine Mountains and the Queer Mountain WSAs are deserving of wilderness designation in addition to increasing the size of the Silver Peak Range WSA. All together, I urge you to recommend at least 66,000 acres in the Grapevine Mtns, 81,000 acres in Queer Mtn. and 35,000 acres in the Silver Pk Range.

Designation of these spectacular areas can only improve the quality of life for all of us who live in the Western United States.

Sincerely,

Lawrence A. Draper

Lawrence A. Draper

5-61

Comment Letter

34

MR. KEMP CONN, DISTRICT MANAGER
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
P.O. BOX 26569
LAS VEGAS, NV 89126

FEB. 17, 1985

DEAR SIR;

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY VIEWS ON THE POSSIBLE DESIGNATION OF WILDERNESS AREAS IN YOUR STATE. I AM REFERRING TO THE GRAPEVINE MOUNTAINS, SILVER PEAKE RANGE AND THE QUEER MOUNTAINS. ALL THESE AREAS HAVE OUTSTANDING WILDERNESS QUALITIES THAT WOULD QUALIFY THEM FOR THIS SPECIAL STATUS. I FEEL THAT IT IS INPORTANT TO SAVE AS MUCH WILDERNESS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. ALSO I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE HABITATS OF WILD ANIMALS SAVED IN THE LARGEST PROPORTIONS POSSIBLE AS THEY HAVE NO WHERE ELSE TO GO.

THERE ARE NO RESOURCES OF SIGNIFICANT VALUE IN THESE AREAS TO CONFLICT WITH THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS. ALSO THE GRAPEVINE AND QUEER MOUNTAIN AREAS ARE CLOSE TO DEATH VALLEY AND COULD BECOME AN EXTENSION OF THAT WILDERNESS AREA.

PLEASE CONSIDER SAVING ALL OF THESE AREAS FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS, AFTER ALL THERE IS SO LITTLE LEFT THAT HAS NOT BEEN TOUCHED BY MAN.

THANK YOU,

SINCERELY,

Virginia Valentine

Virginia Valentine

Comment Letter

35

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
POB 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126
Attent: Esmeralda-S. Nye RMP

February 19, 1985

Dear Mr. Conn,

I would like to express my views on the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Draft Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The document, prepared by the Bureau of Land Management under your direction, is to be commended for the effort put into the RMP-EIS and its excellent presentation. My letter will address the three issues put forth in the draft.

ISSUE #1 - WILDERNESS - ALTERNATIVE B (page 24)
This alternative is a compromise. All wilderness or a small allotment as is found in the Preferred Alternative are in the extreme. By selecting Alternative B, wilderness is given a chance of being a viable resource. I believe compromise is important when dealing with mineral rights, land tenure, utility corridors, rangeland, and wilderness.

5-92

ISSUE #2 - LAND TENURE AND UTILITY CORRIDOR - PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (page 19)
Utility corridors need long-range planning. To facilitate this need, the Preferred Alternative is more acceptable than the others presented. The future use of "designated corridors" will enhance utility companies planning abilities. However, an increase in "planning corridors" could lead to unsightly and unnecessary transmission lines. "Planning corridors" should be looked at with consideration given to their actual need. Land tenure, as described in the Preferred Alternative appears to be reasonalbe and not too excessive.

ISSUE #3 - RANGELAND - PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (page 19)
Rangeland is an important aspect of any resource management plan. Wise use of rangeland will either enhance an area, thus assuring continued productivity, or degrade an area to where it is of no use to any animal wild or domestic. Livestock, wild horses and burros, and wildlife would benefit under the Preferred Alternative. The rangeland in these areas are extremely fragile and in reasonably good condition. An increase in grazing may endanger species that are marginal in the areas under consideration. However, the trade-off of a slight increase in livestock for an increase in wildlife seems, to me, to be acceptable.

Thank you for the opportunity to express my views and for taking the time to read my letter.

Respectfully,

Becky Parr

Becky Parr
5303 Stampa Ave.
Las Vegas, NV 89102

Comment Letter

36

February 14, 1985

Nevada Bureau of Land Management;

I am writing in support of wilderness recomendations for Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 acres), Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres) and the Silver Peak Range WSA (35,000 acres). All three areas clearly qualify for wilderness designation. The Graprvine and Queer Mountain WSAs are important and logical exentions of the Death Valley wilderness complex and should be protected. None of these areas have significant resource conflicts; wilderness is the best and most logical use for these areas. Becauseof the Silver Peaks Range's outstanding wilderness qualities and its importance to large herds of bighorn sheep and wild horses, the maximum acreage should be recomended for wilderness.

This letter is in support of the Sierra Clubs effort to save wilderness for prosperity and the children of our nation.

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Visculia
Joseph A. Visculia
Mary Visculia
Mary Visculia

Comment Letter

37

P.O. Box 2634
Gardena, Ca 90247
Feb 16, 1985

Mr Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Kemp:

I urge you to support wilderness recommendations for:

Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 acres)
Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres)
Silver Peak Range WSA (35,600 acres)

None of these areas have significant resource conflicts. Wilderness is the best designation for these areas.

Silver Peak is particularly important for large herds of bighorn sheep and wild horses.

Sincerely
Iva M. Perkins
(Iva M. Perkins)

Comment Letter

38

Feb. 15, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn -

I'm writing to let you know that I support the wilderness recommendations for the following areas that clearly qualify as wilderness.

1. Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 acres)
2. Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres)
3. Silver Peak Range WSA (35,600 acres)

The first two areas are extensions of the Death Valley wilderness and must be protected.
The Silver Peak Range has outstanding wilderness qualities such as wildlife and must be protected.

None of these areas have resource conflicts therefore wilderness is the best use of this land.

Please support these areas.
Thank you,
Marsha George

Comment Letter

39

Glen C. Miller
581 Creighton Way
Reno NV 89503

Feb 19, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn,

This letter is written in support of the Wilderness emphasis alternative of the Esmeralda EIS. Specifically I support recommending the Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 acres), Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres) and Silver Mountain WSA (35,000 acres). The Silver Peak area has particularly high wildlife values, and needs to be expanded to the full 35,000 acres for recommendation in the final EIS. The Bighorn sheep are true wilderness animals whose existence depends on remoteness and distance from humans.

Both Queer Mountain & Grapevine Mountains are fine wilderness areas which will greatly contribute to the Death Valley complex, a unique and valuable ecosystem of particular high fragility due to the arid nature of these areas. These three areas are minimal wilderness recommendations, & I feel are important for balance of wilderness versus nonwilderness uses in Nevada.

Sincerely,
Glen C. Miller

5-64

Comment Letter

40-1

Edward S. Duerr
2150 Plateau Way
Reno, Nevada 89512
2-17-85

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn,

In response to a recent DEIS issued for the following; Grapevine Mountains, Queer Mountain, and Silver Peak Range, I would like to support a much greater land area for wilderness consideration. Considering the beauty, remote location, and present land use, these areas are ideal for wilderness. Having spent time camping and exploring these regions, I must support at least the following Conservationist alternative:

Grapevine Mountain WSA (66,800 acres)
Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres)
Silver Peak Range WSA (35,000 acres)

As a professional engineer, I am very much involved with development in Nevada. However, I also realize the

Comment Letter

40-2

importance of wilderness as a natural, recreational, and economic resource for our state. In order to diversify, and attract many types of people to our state, we must provide alternative recreational experiences. Statistics show that, as areas become part of the national wilderness system, many more people visit and utilize these areas. Certainly, these people will also utilize many of the services and facilities Nevada has to offer. Therefore, the wilderness will not only be a natural preserve, but an important recreational and economic resource.

Please support a strong wilderness recommendation for these areas.

Sincerely,
Edward J. Durr, P.E.

Comment Letter

41

Ann Kersten
1650 Royal Dr.
Reno, NV.
89503

Dear Mr. Conn,

I am writing in support of Wilderness recommendation for three areas in and around Death Valley National Monument:

1) Grapevine Mountain WSA (66,800 acres)
2) Queer Mountain WSA (81,550 acres)
3) Silver Peak Range WSA (35,000 acres)

The BLM's recommendation of only one-half of the Silver Peak Range is completely inadequate. All three of these areas clearly qualify for wilderness designation, and none have significant resource conflicts. In addition, all three are spectacular areas and would be an important addition to our wilderness heritage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Ann Kersten

Comment Letter

42-1

1835 Clearacre Ln
Reno NV 89512
Feb 18, 1985.

Mr. Kemp Conn, Dist. Mgr.
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr Conn,

This letter concerns the DEIS for the Emerald Wilderness Areas. As I understand it you are currently recommending only about 12,000 acres of the Silver Peak Range be included as Wilderness although at least three outstanding areas deserve such designation. These include the 66,800 acre Grapevine Mountains 81,550 acre Queen Mountain and all 35,000 acres of the Silver Peak area.

5-96

Comment Letter

42-2

all three of these areas clearly qualify for Wilderness status. They are at present relatively unspoiled and harbor features unique to the area. They have little potential value for development and so keeping them in their present pristine state is the best economic use of this land. It will cost us little and benefit us much to preserve these areas.

As the mother of five children born either in California or Nevada I'd like to believe we can leave these areas as a heritage for generations to come.

By all means expand the recommend Wilderness area to include these areas contiguous to Death Valley Monument.

Sincerely
Terry Woodin

Comment Letter

43

Gregory P. Ebner
14 East "I" St.
Sparks, Nv. 89431

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Mr. Conn,

The purpose of this letter is to express my support for wilderness designation of the following WSA's in the Death Valley Region:

1) Grapevine Mtns WSA (66,800 acres)

2) Queen Mtns WSA (81,550 acres)

3) Silver Peak Range WSA (35,000 acres)

The above areas will make excellent additions to the wilderness system, and help protect the Death Valley wilderness complex.

Thank-you,

Gregory P Ebner
February 19, 1985

5-87

Comment Letter

44

Feb 18, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
BLM
PO Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

I am a Californian who loves the desert. I camp often in Anza Borego, Joshua Tree, and the Mojave.

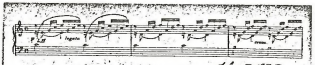
I am writing to urge you to protect more of our California desert lands. Please support wilderness status for the Grapevine Mountains WSA, the Silver Peak Range WSA, and Queen Mountain WSA.

I understand that all of these areas are important additions to nearby wilderness areas, and none has major conflicts with other resource uses. Please do all you can to help designate these as wilderness areas. Thank you.

Dizzy Hobbs
427 Cambridge Ave
Claremont, CA 91711

Comment Letter

45



Feb 15, 1985

Dear Mr. Cox —

I feel that the wilderness recommendations for Grapevine Mts, Queen Mts, and Silver Peak Range are rich with all of these qualities for multiple-use designations as they have resources, conflicts and special qualities for wild animals —

Please see that the maximum acreage is given for the wilderness as my great-great-great children (9 now living) can see these gems —

Sincerely
Lord Family Trust
355 N. Oakland
Pasadena, Ca. 91101

5-68

Comment Letter

46

Feb 19, 1985

Dear Friends at the BLM,

I am a native Californian. I have enjoyed hiking in many wild and beautiful places here and in Nevada all of my life. I first visited the Death Valley area with my family when I was a pre-schooler. I have always thought this area was especially wild and wonderful.

I understand that you have an opportunity to recommend some of the areas around Death Valley as wilderness areas... Grapevine Mountains, Queer Mountain, and the Silver Peak Range I would like very much to see these areas protected, and so I encourage you to take the necessary steps to make them wilderness.

Thank you for your kind attention to my opinions.

Lisa Faith Wood
5455 Kiowa 8
La Mesa 92041

Comment Letter

47

Stuart Clancy
PO Box 921
Verdi, NV 89439

Dear Conn,

I recently discovered that three valuable ranges adjacent to Death Valley have been thru scrutiny of an EIS. The Grapevine, Quartz Mountain, & Silver Peak Range.
That whole area surrounding Death Valley is sensitive lands and the only adequate protection for this area is wilderness protection

~~Death~~
The aura of Death Valley does not stop at the the borders of the current national monument. The full wilderness protection is needed in order to ensure that no harm will come to the desert.

We want wilderness for

Grapevine Mts	66,500 acres
Quartz Mt.	81,550 acres
Silver Peak	35,600 acres

Thank you

Sincerely Yours
Stuart Clancy

5-89

Comment Letter

48-1

February 19, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn
District Manager, BLM
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

Please include for the official record the following comments on the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (INT DOW/EIS 84-60):

I feel that I am uniquely qualified to comment on the issue of wilderness in Nevada as I am a member of every responding special interest group except ranching. I am a professional geologist with work experience with the U.S.G.S. (field mapping); Hanna Mining (base and precious metal exploration); Humble Oil and Refining Co., now Exxon (geophysics). I have also been president of my own mining company, Phoenix Mineral and Mining Associates, for ten years. That company successfully carried out precious opal mining operations at Virgin Valley, Humbolt Co., Nevada for two years as well as base and precious metal exploration and property evaluation in Nevada, Alaska, and elsewhere. During the opal mining operation we had the largest mining operation in Humbolt County according to the Nevada Bureau of Mines. I feel that I am familiar with much of Nevada because of these activities.

I consider myself a conservationist, but I also do considerable field collecting of rocks and minerals and am deeply involved with regional and national rock hound organizations. I have two bad knees which prohibit extensive field work, so I cherish my ability to drive my car like an ORV into the most outlandish areas. (I've gone farther than some motorcycles and pulled jeeps out of bogs.)

Finally, my parents had three lots on Assateague Island which were taken by the U.S. Government for the National Seashore there with what I still consider to be woefully inadequate compensation. There is absolutely no question, however, that the area has been put to a much better use as a National Seashore than had it been developed in cottages. I thoroughly enjoyed my subsequent visit there.

Possibly I have written far too much about myself, but I am going to propose some things for which I thought it best to state my qualifications. The most important one is that I love Nevada very much and would consider it an honor to live there. Virtually everyone I spoke with in the area also cherishes the place, but most, in fact, are so familiar with it that they do not appreciate the uniqueness of the environment in which they live. In time, I think that they and their children will thank you for saving some portion in a degree of wilderness. The designation of Wilderness Areas seeks to preserve exactly those elements of the environment that we all cherish, whether we be ranchers, miners, rockhounds or "conservationists" (whoever they are).

I would concur that the three key management issues are important and should be dealt with. There are really four issues since land disposals and utility right of way corridors are actually separate and distinct from one another within the allowable framework of existing laws and regulations. There is no useful purpose in lumping these together unless aggravation and fanning fear and prejudice are considered useful goals. As a particularly glaring example I would cite the lumping of

Comment Letter

48-2

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
February 19, 1985
Page 2

a NO GRAZING ON ANY PUBLIC LAND and ALL WILDERNESS together in Alternative C. First, the no-grazing scenario is currently illegal and not an option under the current Taylor Grazing Act. Yet repeatedly the BLM has raised this specter to arouse fear in the ranching community. The no-grazing scenario covers the entire resource area. The ALL WILDERNESS scenario applies only to five WSAs. Grazing rights in WSAs or wilderness areas are guaranteed by law and BLM regulation. The only purpose in linking these unrelated issues is a negative one -- namely to foment friction and distrust between several constituencies of the BLM. This is not a proper function of government, which should rather serve to facilitate interaction between citizens. Each issue of the four should have its own set of alternatives developed without the introduction of passions of unrelated issues. This is true because as currently presented the only thread of commonality of the issues is that the BLM has to decide something about them. It should decide them separately on their own merits.

1

Question: Why are the four issues not treated separately?

BLM Allegation:
The Preferred Alternative strives to balance competing demands by providing for production of needed goods and services, while protecting important environmental values. This alternative would change present management to the extent necessary to meet statutory requirements, policy commitments, and to resolve identified issues in a balanced, cost-effective manner (DEIS p 18).

Response:
The BLM appears to be woefully unprepared to make any decisions based on objective measures or observed scientific data on a number of the elements of the three issues and therefore seems to defer making decisions or making decisions based on political emotion.

Issue 3 (wildlife):

1. No condition or trend studies have been initiated in the RMP area for terrestrial wildlife habitat (DEIS p 51).
2. There is insufficient data to determine deer herd distribution (DEIS p 51).
3. There is insufficient data on current range of sage grouse -- assume they still inhabit historic range (DEIS p 54).
4. There is no inventory of sage grouse to delineate key habitat (DEIS p 54).

Issue 3 (horses and burros):

1. Only aerial surveys of horses and burros (DEIS p 56).
2. Specific data on recruitment rate, fecundity rate, survival and mortality are nonexistent within the RMP area (DEIS p 56).

5-70

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

1 The No Grazing Alternative is included as a matter of policy in as much as it provides for a broader range of alternatives and affords the manager another reference point on which to base decisions. During the alternative development stage, a range of alternatives was developed for each issue. Once this was completed the RMP/EIS team combined all issues into four alternatives which they felt provided a logical progression of management prescriptions and helped to simplify the analysis. Alternative A proposes a maximum level of livestock grazing while recommending a minimum acreage for wilderness designation. Alternative B reduced livestock grazing and increased acreage recommended for wilderness designation. Alternative C then eliminated livestock grazing while increasing the area recommended for wilderness designation to a maximum. This was a logical sequence of events for both issues and never to tie no grazing with maximum wilderness. These alternatives are then analyzed and a Preferred Alternative is selected. The Preferred Alternative and subsequent Proposed Plan may be any one of the proposed alternatives, but in most cases, as in this RMP, it integrates portions of all alternatives analyzed. It would have been an overwhelming task to analyze every possible array of management prescriptions.

Comment Letter

48-3

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
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Issue 3 (livestock)

1. Site specific data on riparian vegetation are unknown (DEIS p 46).

2. The apparent trend of ecological sites was estimated once (DEIS p 44).

3. This "trend" was supplemented by four years of cover trend data from nine permanent photo plots in one allotment (DEIS p 44).

Issue 1 (mineral conflict)

1. No detailed minerals inventory exists for each of the five WSAs (DEIS p 151).

Issue 1 (manageability)

1. There are no direct data on compliance with ORV restrictions as they have not been tried in the WSAs.

2. There has been no effort made to gain compliance with ORV restrictions as they have not been tried in the WSAs.

2 Question: Why is the BLM so uninformed about its own range?

Question: How can BLM make balanced management decisions without critical basic scientific data relating directly to those decisions?

Question: Where is the balance in 17850 acres for wilderness and approximately 781,440 acres for utility corridors? This amounts to about 0.5% of the RA for wilderness and 21% of the entire RA for utility corridors!

3 Question: Where is the balance in 0.5% of the total RA for wilderness and 99.4% of the total RA completely open for mineral entry?

Question: Where is the balance in 17,850 acres for wilderness and 94,949 acres to be sold?

BLM Allegation:

Designation of the Pigeon Spring WSA will not occur unless the contiguous California Desert Conservation Area WSA, Sylvania Mountains, is also designated. Pigeon Spring does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California unit (DEIS p 147).

Response:

I concur with respect to the issue of size but not with respect to wilderness value. It should be part of the CDCA unit.

4 Question: Why is the Pigeon Spring WSA treated separately?

Question: Why is this WSA not simply a part of the Sylvania Mountains WSA?

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

2 During the development of the RMP/EIS the best information available was used as the baseline data in the analysis. Although not complete, the Bureau felt it was adequate for the analysis. Management prescriptions identified in the Proposed Plan will continue existing rangeland monitoring studies and establish new studies as recommended by the 1981 Nevada Range Monitoring Procedures. The monitoring studies will determine if management objectives are being reached and what adjustments in livestock use, wild horse and burro numbers and wildlife reasonable numbers are necessary.

3 Wilderness study policy and planning criteria state that, "The BLM will recommend for wilderness designation only those areas for which it has been determined, through the Bureau's multiple resource planning process and public involvement, that wilderness is the most appropriate use of the land and its resources." In addition, it further states that wilderness values must be sufficient to outweigh other resource value foregone due to designation. In the Proposed Plan none of the WSAs were determined to have wilderness values significantly high enough to outweigh mineral values.

Through resource management planning the highest and best use for public land is identified. There is no requirement to balance one use against another (e.g., one acre wilderness for every one acre of utility corridor or land disposal). Planning takes to meet the demands placed on public land while avoiding or reducing conflict with other uses or resources to a minimum.

4 Pigeon Spring and Resting Springs WSAs were not studied along with the larger California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) units they are contiguous to because of conflicting time frames. California completed the CDCA wilderness inventory in 1979. The wilderness study phase was completed in September, 1980 with publication of the final EIS and wilderness suitability recommendations. Nevada did not finish the inventory stage which designated these areas as WSAs until two months later in November, 1980.

Comment Letter

48-4

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
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BLM Allegation:
"Designation of the Resting Spring WSA will not occur unless the contiguous California Desert Conservation Area WSA (Resting Spring Range WSA, No. 145), is also designated. Resting Spring (Nevada) does not meet the wilderness criteria for size and outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation except when considered in conjunction with the California unit." (DEIS p 149).

Response:
I concur with respect to the issue of size but not with respect to wilderness value. It should be part of the CDCA unit.

Question: Why is the Resting Spring WSA (Nevada) treated separately from the contiguous CDCA unit?

5 Question: Why is the Resting Spring WSA (Nevada) not simply part of the Resting Spring WSA (California)?

BLM Allegation: (Grapevine Mountains)
"The entire 66,800 acres within this WSA are recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation. The southern one-third of the mountainous portion of the WSA has a moderate potential for metallic minerals, and the entire WSA has a moderate potential for geothermal resources. The area contains only moderate wilderness values supported primarily by outstanding opportunities for solitude. Motorized vehicle access across the gentle valley terrain of the WSA would adversely affect the BLM's ability to manage the area as wilderness over the long term." (DEIS - Preferred Alternative - p 18.)

Response: of Grapevine Mountains
"Under (Alternative B) 23150 acres would be recommended as suitable. The boundary of the suitable area follows topographic lines around the base of the range and includes all of the mountains. The 43,650 acres that are not recommended under this alternative are the bajadas on the northwest and northeast periphery of the WSA." (DEIS p 134)

"The designated portion includes most of the key features of the WSA. The boundary can be located and is manageable." (DEIS p 134)

Concerning the portions of Silver Peak, Grapevine, and Queer Mountain WSAs found suitable in Alternative B: "Although the 9942D acres of public lands that would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation under this alternative (B) have minimal manageability problems resulting from OHV access or mining claims, it could be expected that opposition to the suitable recommendations would be immediate and intense, especially from the mining sector. This negative response would probably focus on the minerals potential in the Silver Peak Range WSA (DEIS p 138) (emphasis added).

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

5 Pigeon Spring and Resting Springs WSAs were not studied along with the larger California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) units they are contiguous to because of conflicting time frames. California completed the CDCA wilderness inventory in 1979. The wilderness study phase was completed in September, 1980 with publication of the final EIS and wilderness suitability recommendations. Nevada did not finish the inventory stage which designated these areas as WSAs until two months later in November, 1980.

Comment Letter

48-5

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
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"Implementation of this Alternative (C) would be a significant beneficial impact as far as preserving and protecting the wilderness resource for future generations is concerned"(DEIS p 151).

6 Question: Since there are 23150 acres of prime wilderness area with a manageable and locateable boundary and minimal manageability problems resulting from ORV access or mining claims has been identified in Alternative B, why is this acreage for the Grapevine Mtns. not included in the Preferred Alternative?

Question: What has comment from the mining community or anyone else concerning Silver Peak to do with the Grapevine Mtns. WSA?

7 Question: How can the BLM arrive at the conclusion that a portion of the Grapevine Mtns. WSA has a moderate mineral potential (which it does not) (DEIS p 18 and elsewhere) when "no detailed minerals inventory exists for each of the five WSAs"? (DEIS p 151)

BLM Allegation:
"The entire 81,550 acres within this WSA (Queer Mountain) are recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation. The northwest, northeast and southeast portions of the WSA have a moderate potential for metallic minerals. The entire WSA also has a moderate potential for geothermal resources. The area contains only moderate wilderness values, supported primarily by outstanding opportunities for solitude. Management of the entire area as wilderness over the long term cannot be assured due to the potential for development of valid mining claims in the northern portion of the WSA and the ease of motorized vehicle access throughout most of the WSA." (DEIS p 18).

Response:
"Under this alternative (B) 42550 acres (of the Queer Mountain WSA) would be recommended as suitable. The suitable area encompasses the southern three-quarters of the mountainous portion of the WSA. The boundary of the suitable area follows topographic lines, natural features, and the California border." (DEIS p 135)

Concerning the Queer Mountain, Grapevine Mountain, and Silver Peak WSA portions found suitable in Alternative B: "...the 99420 acres of public lands that would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation have minimal manageability problems resulting from ORV access or mining claims..." (DEIS p 138).

I am unaware or ANY validated mining claims within the WSA. There are mining claims which might prove valid upon examination, but none have been validated to my knowledge at this time.

8 Question: Have any claims been validated in the Queer Mountains WSA?

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

6 The criterion used to select the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) for the Grapevine Mountains WSA was the presence of a moderate potential for metallic minerals in approximately one-third of the mountainous portion of the WSA. Wilderness values were not high enough to outweigh mineral potential.

7 Mineral potential was developed using the Geology-Energy-Mineral report (GEM) developed for the area in addition to a geochemical report completed by the Nevada Bureau of Mines and professional judgement.

8 No claims have been validated.

Comment Letter

48-6

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
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9 Question: Since a coherent block of 42650 acres of the Queer Mountain WSA with definable boundaries which can be found on the ground and having minimal manageability problems resulting from ORV access or mining claims has been set forth in Alternative B, why is this acreage not included in the Preferred Alternative?

BLM Allegation: (of the Silver Peak Range)
"A central core area totalling 17850 acres, which possesses high wilderness values is recommended as suitable for wilderness designation. The addition of 1134 acres of public land at the mouth of Icehouse Canyon along the northwest side of the WSA improves the management situation of the area by establishing an easily recognizable boundary based on topography. The remainder of 17184 acres is recommended as non-suitable for wilderness designation due to the moderate and high potential for metallic minerals and geothermal resources as well as to avoid potential conflicts with mining claims along the periphery of the WSA." (DEIS p 19)

Response: (of the Silver Peak Range)
Under Alternative B "33620 acres would be recommended as suitable including 3065 acres that were not part of the original WSA. This added area is primarily in the northwest corner of the WSA, including the lower end of Icehouse Canyon and the northwest escarpment. Additional acreage would be added in the southern part of the WSA to within 200 feet of the McAfee Canyon Road. The boundary of the suitable area follows topographic lines or roads. The 3345 acres that would be recommended as non-suitable are primarily in Piper Canyon along the west boundary. Additional acreage would be deleted on the fringe of the WSA along the eastern boundary. The designated portion is remarkably pristine. Opportunities for day hiking and backpacking are outstanding because of the designated portions' varied topography, attractive rock formations, diverse plant communities, water, wildlife, outstanding views and varieties of destinations. Other primitive recreation activities are of a high quality. The portion added to the original WSA would increase wilderness benefits by adding wilderness values and by creating a manageable boundary. Due to the rugged topography, it all adds up to the outstanding opportunities for solitude found in the designated area. These acres also contribute to the outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation by protecting areas, particularly the lower end of Icehouse Canyon, which would be part of dayhikes or backpacks into the original WSA. The added areas contain springs, riparian acreas, sheep habitat, and colorful and rugged cliffs which all add to the value of the recreation experience. (DEIS p 132/6)

The boundary of the designated area can be located on the ground and consequently would be manageable. (DEIS p 136)

It would be appropriate here to discuss the matter of "mineral" potential. The definitions used here for high, medium and low potential may be found in the DEIS Glossary, p. 195. The terms seek to define favorability for accumulation of a mineral resource. A resource is a net asset, a place in this case, which can produce mineral wealth at a profit. This is a mine. Mines compete with

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

9 The criterion used to select the Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative) for the Queer Mountain WSA was the presence of a moderate potential for metallic minerals in the northwest, northeast and southeast portions of the WSA. Wilderness values were not high enough to outweigh mineral potential.

Comment Letter

48-7

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
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respect to local, regional and most especially with world market resources for the material mined. An area's potential must be evaluated in this context -- its ability to produce a viable mine.

This is not the context in which especially "moderate" potential is used in the DEIS. If favorable rocks can be inferred to be questionably associated with a pluton some miles away in areas of often intense faulting -- they are held to be moderately favorable (see the discussion of the granitic rocks of Helmet Mtn. in the Grapevine WSA, DEIS p 62). This is ridiculous!

As to the assertion of moderate (let alone high) mineral potential for broad areas of each WSA, one needs to critically examine the definition (DEIS p. 195). The geologic environment need only consist of being in the hills or mountains as opposed to the intermontane basins. The inferred geologic processes or hydrothermal emplacement, contact replacement, or regional metamorphism of syngenetic deposits can be widespread without leading to any economically significant concentrations of metals. None of these processes (or any other) is specifically claimed to be present within a WSA. They just might be. A reported mineral occurrence is just that. Someone reports (often erroneously) that there is a particular mineral present. In and of itself this has absolutely no economic significance for production. Mineral occurrences do not make mines. Moderate potential for a mine requires a known mineral deposit, i.e., large enough reserves of sufficient grade to warrant extraction at a profit or near a profit. The way the definition reads, all the hills and mountains (as opposed to the intermontane valleys) would have moderate potential. What we need to know is how the area of the WSA compares with the adjacent area, and similar areas regionally, nationally, and world-wide with respect to potential production.

There are no known areas of high mineral potential even as defined in the Glossary within the Silver Peak WSA because nowhere in the DEIS is there a mention of evidence for a mine, mineral reserves or even a known deposit within the WSA. The closest is the block of Sunshine Mining claims outside the WSA east of Mud Spring. In the acreage proposed in Alternative B the boundary has been pulled back to avoid conflict with these claims.

It is particularly difficult to comprehend how such claims of moderate and high mineral potential can be put forth WITHOUT A DETAILED MINERAL SURVEY (DEIS p 151)!

Once again it is necessary to quote "...the 9042D acres of public lands that would be recommended as suitable for wilderness designation under this alternative (B) have minimal manageability problems resulting from ORV access or mining claims..." (DEIS p 138).

10 Question: Why is this amended acreage under Alternative B not included in the Preferred Alternative?

5-25

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

10 Wilderness values found within the WSA are not high enough to outweigh the moderate and high potential for metallic minerals found within the WSA.

Comment Letter

48-8

Mr. Kemp Conn
Re: Esmeralda-Southern Nye
February 19, 1985
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BLM Allegation:
It is crucial to the survival of bighorn in the planning area that critical summer use areas within a two-mile radius of water sources remain relatively undisturbed (DEIS p 51).

Response: I concur.

11 Question: Why is this factor barely mentioned with respect to the Silver Peak WSA and not considered at all for the Grapevine Mountains and Queen Mountain WSAs? According to the Preferred Alternative, the sheep are to be reintroduced in these two WSAs (DEIS p 151 and elsewhere).

BLM Allegation:
No significant impacts to the area economy would occur as a result of [full] wilderness designation (DEIS Alternative C, p 151).

Response:
I concur. The real issue is stated very clearly in Alternative C, DEIS p. 151: "Recommending all five wilderness study areas as suitable for wilderness designation would probably be considered a significant adverse impact by many individuals and stakeholder groups, especially those who are mining sector oriented. In terms of opportunities foregone, this could be a significant adverse impact to the communities if those areas include mineral deposits of viable economic value. However, since no detailed minerals inventory exists for each of the five WSAs, this is speculative and not quantifiable. However, implementation of this aspect of this alternative would be a significant beneficial impact as far as preserving and protecting the wilderness resource for future generations is concerned." [Emphasis added.]

That is the problem in a nutshell. Answers can possibly be had from the USGS if these three WSAs (Grapevine, Silver Peak, Queer Mtn.) are recommended as suitable and they do the prescribed minerals survey.

As no mineral data are available from surveys, no acreage should be deleted for assumed mineral value. As no implementation of any ORV restrictions have been tried and these areas have been kept essentially pristine for 75 years of vehicular use, no acreage should be deleted for potential ORV abuse. I recommend full recommendation for Grapevine and Queer Mountain and Alternative B for Silver Peak.

Sincerely,

Paul Clifford

Paul Clifford
2955 Berkshire
Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118

5-76

Response Letter

RESPONSE TO LETTER 48

11 As discussed in Chapter 1 under "Issue Identification" wilderness designation or nondesignation would not impact the BLM's ability to manage for bighorn sheep. In addition, no activities were projected which would significantly impact bighorn sheep or their habitat regardless of designation.

Comment Letter

49-1

FROM: WALTER BARBUCK

4050 Palos Verdes, Apt 19
Las Vegas, Nv 89119

TO: Mr Kemo Conn
District Manager
Attn: Esmeralda-S. Nye RMP

Feb 19, 1985

SUBJECT: Comments regarding above

I am Saddened that the BLM in it's draft EIS for Esmeralda-Southern Nye only found fit to recommend 9% of the total W.S.A.'s for designation. Included is the preferred alternative of only 53% of Silver Peak which is the entire BLM recommendation. Adapting the "B" alternative will add the dense forested areas of the eastern slopes of Silver Peak which are classified as outstanding in the vegative screening catagory. The boundries of this WSA would easily be identifiable on the ground. Under the preferred alternative using the Bailey-Kuchler system for diversity, Juniper-Pinyon woodlands in the entire WSA would be grossly unrepresented. This should be noted because while all of the Esmeralda ecosystem is represented in the National Wilderness Preservation System, it is only to a minor degree. The entire Silver Peak Wilderness Study Area is remarkably prestine with topographic screening outstanding throughout except for the flat summit ridge. The spotted bat classified "rare" by Nevada and sensitive by the BLM may also inhabit the WSA. Petrified wood has been found in Icehouse Canyon. A source of obsidian etc indicates a high favorability for prehistoric resources.

The "B" alternative is recommended for Grapevine Mountains WSA. The National Park Service feels designation in the north end of the range would complement, protect and provide general integrity for their own proposed wilderness within adjacent Death Valley National Monument. Again Pinyon-Juniper woodlands in various densities occur in the south end of the range. Topographic screening is outstanding in the mountainous portion (B) of the WSA.

The California Desert Conservation Area has recommended that Little Sands Springs be afforded wilderness. The Park Service has also endorsed their area for Wilderness. Queer Mountain contiguous to the above is felt to be remarkably presting. Blocky configuration and mountainous terrain offers outstanding opportunities for solitude. The "B" alternative would provide a logical addition contingent upon Little Sand Springs WSA achieving designation.

-1-

Comment Letter

49-2

In consulting Summary Tables # 1 and 2 of the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area Draft, with the exception of the Wilderness issue discussed in above paragraphs, I am reasonably happy with the BLM in the stance taken on the issues mentioned and enviormental components broken down. There is give and take in which all interested parties should be able to live with. As a last comment I hope all riparian zone losses, if any, could be kept to an absolute minimum and improved, without mans imprint, wherever possible

Sincerely

WALTER BARBUCK
member
Sierra Club

-2-

Comment Letter

50

Mr Kemp Conn, Dist Mgr. 2/12/85
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nv 89126

Dear Mr Kempton:

I am concerned about the protection and preservation of the desert lands that surround Death Valley namely the Grapevine Mountains, Queer Mountain and the Silver Peak Range. I understand that your recommendation for wilderness status is considerably reduced from those proposed by concerned conservation groups. I also understand that these lands are not being sought after for natural resources and their best use for them would be in a state of protection.

Habitat for bighorn sheep is shrinking in the southwest. The Silver Peak Range provides sustenance to a large herd. Please review your acreage and recommend the full 35,000 for wilderness status.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Alison Hutchings

F-78

Comment Letter

51

February 16, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 265669
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

This letter is to urge you to support wilderness status for the following areas:

1. Grapevine Mountains WSA
2. Queer Mountain WSA
3. Silver Peak Range WSA

These outstanding areas need to be protected and preserved. All three areas within the California Desert qualify for the designation"wilderness", and Queer Mtn. and Silver Peak are logical extensions of the Death Valley wilderness complex.

I recommend maximum acreage in the Silver Peak area due to the importance of bighorn sheep and wild horses.

Please think of the future when you consider these propositions. We cannot afford to let our land be misused or abused. Wilderness is essential to our way of life.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Comment Letter

52

February 16, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
PO Box 265669
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

This letter is to urge you to support wilderness status for the following areas:

1. Grapevine Mountains WSA
2. Queer Mountain WSA
3. Silver Peak Range WSA

These outstanding areas need to be protected and preserved. All three areas within the California Desert qualify for the designation"wilderness", and Queer Mtn. and Silver Peak are logical extensions of the Death Valley wilderness complex.

I recommend maximum acreage in the Silver Peak area due to the importance of bighorn sheep and wild horses.

Please think of the future when you consider these propositions. We cannot afford to let our land be misused or abused. Wilderness is essential to our way of life.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Comment Letter

53

Tues. Feb. 19, '85

Dear Mr. Conn:

I support wilderness recommendations for:

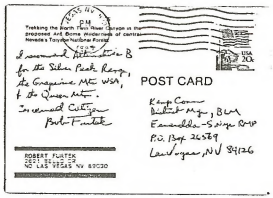
Grapevine Mountains WSA (66,800 acres)
Queer Mountain WSA (6,550 acres)
Silver Peak Range WSA (35,000 acres)

We have too little wilderness areas as it is- the desert is being destroyed by off-road vehicles and development. Let's leave some protected areas for our descendents. Bighorn sheep and wild horses need a lot of land to survive- and once the land is given over to commerce, it is gone forever.

yours,

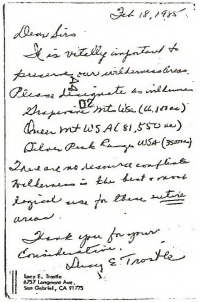
Comment Letter

54



Comment Letter

55



Comment Letter

56-1

C H E R I C I N K O S K E
816 LILLIS
N. LAS VEGAS, NV. 89030
702-642-7238

February 26, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Attn: Esmeralda-So. Nye RMP
Bureau of Land Management
P. O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

I realize that it is past the deadline for comments on the Esmeralda-Southern Nye Planning Area RMP DEIS. However, I hope it is not too late for you to consider my comments, especially regarding wilderness areas with the Planning Area. It's an area that is very important to me, but I have been too sick with the flu to get a letter written until now.

5-81

Last Spring I was on a backpack in the Silver Peak range. I was extremely impressed with the quality of the wilderness experience there. We saw wild horses, as well as tremendous specimens of petrified wood. It was an extremely wet area, with numerous springs--a rarity in most BLM areas in Nevada. In addition, the feeling of solitude, of having the entire range all to ourselves, was extremely impressive. The beauty of the surrounding hillsides, their brilliant colors, definitely impressed my friends to whom I showed slides following my trip. I feel that the boundaries which should be established for this wilderness area are those outlined in Alternative B. Your Wilderness Technical Report well describes the wilderness attributes of the Silver Peak Range. The entire Piper Canyon basin deserves addition to the wilderness system as proposed in Alternative B. By adding terrain on the east and southeast, Alternative B would protect well-forested slopes and the basin containing the scenic and ecologically important Jeff Davis and Blind Springs. It would also offer protection of the summer habitat critical to the herd of over 100 desert bighorn sheep.

It seems there is only one area classified as highly favorable for metallic minerals, and this is a very small portion of the range. Mining here may significantly damage the wildlife and habitat associated with Blind Spring. Miners so far have seen no need to develop mineral values in the Range. Indeed, it is mere speculation for the most part that such values exist. On the other hand, wilderness enthusiasts have enjoyed the superb wilderness values and wish to see them preserved. We lose nothing by preserving this land as wilderness. If, in the future, it becomes necessary to explore the area for minerals, such minerals will also have been preserved.

Comment Letter

56-2

I have not had a chance to personally explore the Grapevine Mountains WSA. However, I know that it is contiguous with WSA #4 in Death Valley National Monument. Since the latter has been administratively endorsed as suitable for wilderness by the National Park Service (NPS), it is important to preserve the wilderness integrity of the Grapevine Mountains across the BLM/NPS boundary. If there were mineral development immediately to the north in the Helmet Peak area, there would be negative impacts on the Park Service's wilderness. The Grapevine Mountains are an integral part of the same unit. They are the beginning of the foothills which become higher and higher as the range extends into Death Valley National Monument. At a minimum, the mountainous core of this area, as defined by Alternative B, should be recommended as wilderness. Indeed, I feel the wilderness proposal could be expanded to include the flat bajadas. Although BLM has repeatedly refused to include bajadas because of the possible intrusion of ORVs, this seems merely like a self fulfilling prophecy. Furthermore, it is analogous to stating we should not bother to outlaw killing just because some people are going to kill anyways. I feel most ORVers would respect the law and not trespass into a designated wilderness area.

As far as Queen Mountain, I feel this should be proposed as wilderness, contingent on the designation of the Little Sand Spring unit in California. The California Desert Conservation Area has recommended such designation, and here again it is important to follow natural boundaries, not political ones. Again I would prefer Alternative B's boundaries for this area. As I mention above, I do not accept the argument that areas should not be designated as wilderness because of the possibility of ORV intrusion.

Finally, I am concerned that the BLM Preferred Alternative is expected to produce a mere 1% improvement in ecological condition. Since goals are supposed to be something to aim for, recognizing that one might fall short of reaching them, I feel that the proposed improvement should be much greater. Indeed, considering the extreme uncertainties that surround achieving the goal, as well as the inherent flaws of statistical projection, a 1% proposed improvement could easily become a decrease in the quality of the range.

Thank you for considering my unfortunately late comments.

Sincerely,

Cheri Cinkoske

Cheri Cinkoske

Comment Letter

57

February 24, 1985

Marlee Ostrow
365 N. Spaulding Ave. #1
Los Angeles, CA. 90036

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV 89126

Dear Mr. Conn:

I am writing to you in regards to the Bureau of Land Management recommendations for the future of the land surrounding Death Valley National Monument. I sincerely hope the areas in question (Grapevine Mountains WSA, Queer Mountain WSA and Silver Peak Range WSA) are going to be recommended in their entirety and totality as wilderness areas. Due to their lack of profitable natural resources such as minerals and timber, it seems only logical that they be left alone to nurture the living resources they contain such as bighorn sheep (a Critical summer habitat in the Silver Peak Range!) and wild horses.

It appears to me that the Grapevine and Queer Mountain WSA's should be recommended as wilderness areas if only to act as buffer land for Death Valley National Monument. The fact that the boundaries of these areas may be difficult to detect from the ground is all the more reason to recommend the total areas for wilderness designation. Maybe that way at least the core of each area can remain pristine, much in the same manner as a coconut husk protecting the sweet meat inside.

I encourage you to recommend all 66,800 acres of Grapevine Mountains WSA, all 81,550 acres of Queer Mountain WSA, and all 35,000 acres of Silver Peak Range WSA for wilderness designation. Lets leave some awesome desolate wilderness for the future and our own peace of mind.

Sincerely,
Marlee Ostrow
Marlee Ostrow

5-82

Comment Letter

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March 16, 1985

Mr. Kemp Conn, District Manager
Bureau of Land Management
Box 26569
Las Vegas, NV

Dear Mr. Conn

I am writing in hopes this letter is not too late to encourage wilderness designation for 3 areas: Grapevine Mountains WSA
Queer Mountain WSA
Silver Peak Range WSA.

These areas qualify as wilderness. The first two are logical extensions of Death Valley wilderness. Resource conflicts are not significant for all areas. The third area is important bighorn sheep habitat, and for this reason I encourage you to designate the full area available, not just a portion. Preserving these wilderness areas is important for our long-term future. I hope you will not let short term priorities outweigh these long-term values.

Sincerely
Ann Pitchford
942 Dalton Dr.
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Comment Letter

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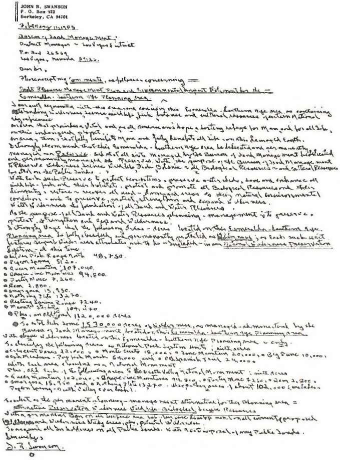

JOHN R. SWANSON
P. O. Box 927
Berkeley, CA 94701

February 11, 1985.

Bureau of Land Management,
District Manager ~ Las Vegas District
P.O. Box 26569
Las Vegas, Nevada 89126.

Dear Sir,

Please accept my comments, as follows, concerning ==

Draft Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the —
Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning Area.

I am well acquainted with this area, and consider this Esmeralda - Southern Nye area as containing outstanding wilderness, scenic, wildlife, fish, botanic and cultural resources, of certain National significance
an area that provides a vital and, for all Americans, hope a lasting refuge for Man and for all Life, on this endangered planet.
an area, then, that fully benefits Man and fully benefits all Life on this Sovereign Earth.
I strongly recommend that this Esmeralda - Southern Nye area be dedicated and permanently managed as a Preserve, and that all areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management be dedicated and permanently managed as Preserves. With the purpose of the Bureau of Land Management to Preserve Wilderness, Scenic, Wildlife, Fish, Botanic, all Biological Resources and Cultural Resources located on the Public Lands.
With each such Preserve to protect ecosystems, preserve watersheds, save and enhance all wildlife - fish and their habitats, protect and promote all Biological Resources and their diversity, restore - recover all used - damaged areas to their natural environmental conditions - and to preserve, protect, strengthen and expand Wilderness.
With Wilderness the foundation of all Land and Water Resources.
As the purpose of all Land and Water Resources planning - management is to preserve, protect, strengthen and expand Wilderness.
I strongly urge that the following areas - acres located on this Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning area be fully classified and permanently protected as Wilderness; as each such unit features superb wilderness attributes, and to be included - in our National Wilderness Preservation System - at this time.

- Silver Peak Range North 48,750.
- Pigeon Spring 5120.
- Queer Mountain 107,040.
- Grapevine Mountains 94,800.
- Porter Mine 7,260.
- Sem 2,880.
- Amargosa 15,950.
- Nothing Flats 13,270.
- Resting Spring Range 7240.
- Mount Stirling 104,470
- Plus, an additional 1125,000 Acres
- To total then some 1,530,000 acres of Wilderness, as managed - administered by the Bureau of Land Management, located on this Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning area.

With above Wilderness located on this Esmeralda - Southern Nye Planning area - only.
To classify the following areas as National Park System Units; with acres
- Crescent Dunes 22,000, - Monte Cristo 18,000, - Lone Mountain 20,000, - Big Dune 10,000,
- Ash Meadows - Pupfish Marsh 64,000 and - Old Spanish Trail 24,000.

With each area classified as a National Monument.
Plus, add each of the following areas to the Death Valley National Monument; with acres
- Queer Mountain 107,040, - Grapevine Mountains 94,800, - Porter Mine 7,260, - Sem 2,800,
- Amargosa 15,950 and - Nothing Flats 13,270 - also, other areas of about 102,000 (includes Pigeon Spring - Death Valley even South).

I select as the permanent planning - management alternative for this Planning area = Alternative Preservation Wilderness Wildlife Biological Scenic Resources
With a permanent Ban on all surface and sub-surface development on all currently proposed Wilderness and Wilderness Study areas, plus, potential Wilderness.
To acquire all In holdings on all Public Lands. With no disposal of any Public Lands.

Sincerely,

J. R. Swanson.

ER'S CARD

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ern Nye

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